



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF 76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution. Price 5 Cents.

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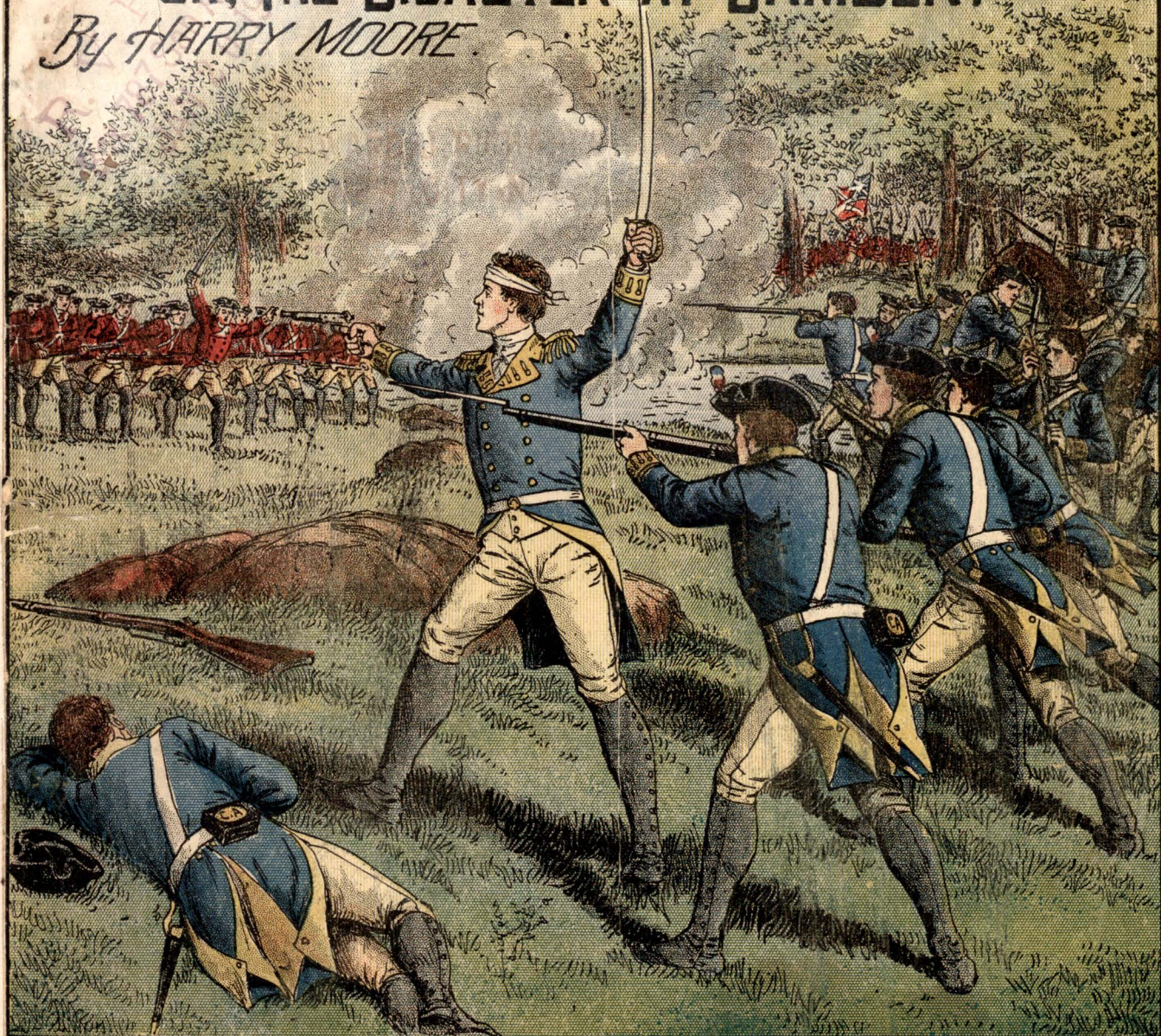
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NEW YORK, MARCH 18, 1904.

Price 5 CENTS.

THE LIBERTY BOYS AND GENERAL GATE OR, THE DISASTER AT CAMDEN.

By HARRY MOORE



"Stand firm, Liberty Boys!" cried Dick, waving his sword with one hand and firing a pistol with the other; "show the British what brave patriot soldiers can do!" The Liberty Boys fired a volley at the approaching British soldiers.

"Dick

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No. 168.

NEW YORK, MARCH 18, 1904.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS AND GENERAL GATES:

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OR,

R. V. PERINE,

Box 787 San Antonio, Texas.

The Disaster at Camden.

JAN 20 1917

HOWARD J. RICHARDS,
NEW CITY, N.Y.

LARRY MOORE.

R. V. PERINE,
Box 787 San Antonio, Texas.

CHAPTER I.

A BACKWOODS WEDDING.

"What is the chance for me to stay overnight, sir?"

"Stranger, ye're welcome ter stay."

"Very good; I thank you."

"Thet's all right; down heer in South Ca'liny we don't never let nobuddy sleep out uv doors er go hungry, ef we kin he'p et."

"I know you Southern people are hospitable."

"Thet's ther word fur et, young fellow; we're hospitable."

It was nearly sundown on a beautiful evening in August, of the year 1780.

A handsome, bronzed young man of perhaps twenty or twenty-one years of age had stopped in front of a farmhouse in Central South Carolina. He was mounted on a magnificent coal-black horse.

A man had come out to the front yard fence as the traveler reined up his horse, and the above conversation had ensued.

The man was a typical farmer of the vicinity and time.

He was rough and shaggy looking, but good-natured appearing, nevertheless, and was evidently an honest, hard-working man. He was clad in blue homespun.

"How far is it to Camden?" the young traveler asked, as he leaped down from his horse.

"'Bout ten miles, stranger."

"So far as that?"

"Yas; what mought yer name be, stranger?"

"Dick Slater."

It was indeed the famous young patriot scout and spy, Dick Slater.

Usually he gave a fictitious name when traveling, but he was in a region where he believed his name had never been heard, and so did not hesitate to give his own name.

Dick was the captain of a company of youths who were known as "The Liberty Boys of '76," and they had done wonderful work in the north during the four years that they had been in the patriot army. And now they had come down South to help General Gates, who was trying to defeat General Cornwallis, whose army was encamped at Camden.

Dick's horse, Major, was a magnificent thoroughbred, of Arabian stock, and he was so speedy that Dick was enabled to travel much faster than the rest of the Liberty Boys. The youth was eager to find General Gates' army and give the general a letter that had been sent by the commander-in-chief, so he had ridden as rapidly as possible, and was quite a long distance ahead of the company of Liberty Boys.

As he did not know just where to look for the patriot army, Dick had decided that he would stop overnight at this farmhouse and then continue the search on the following day.

"Come right along with me," said the farmer; "ther stable is aroun' behind ther house."

Dick followed the man, leading the horse, and they were soon at the stable.

Dick led the horse into a stall, and unbridled and unsaddled him, while the man gave him some feed.

"What is your name, sir?" Dick asked.

"Sim Hardy."

"Have you lived here long?"

"Bout forty years."

"You must have been here most all your life, then."

"Thet's right."

As they left the stable and started toward the house the man said, with a grin:

"Ye didn't know nothin' erbout et, of course, but ye got heer jest in time fur somethin'."

"What?" asked Dick.

"Ther weddin'."

The youth started, and looked at the man inquiringly.

"You say there is to be a wedding here?" he inquired.

"Yes, ter-night."

"Who is to be married?"

"My gal, Sally, an' er young feller by ther name uv Bill Scroggins."

"Then I ought not to stay," said Dick. "I will be in the way."

"Not ertall, Mr. Slater; we'll be glad ter have ye heer, an' thar's ter be er big feast arter ther sairimony, an' then arter thet there'll be some dancin'. Ye'll like et."

"True," agreed Dick; "I will enjoy the feast and also the dancing."

"Thet's whut I thort."

They were soon at the house, and entered at the rear, by way of the kitchen.

A woman of thirty-five years was at work in the kitchen, and also a girl of perhaps eighteen years. The girl was round-faced and freckled, and while she was not pretty, was good-natured looking.

The man introduced Dick to them, and the youth acknowledged the introductions by shaking hands, the woman and the girl both extending their hands and giving him a hearty greeting. The woman was introduced as "Molly," and the girl as "Sally."

"So that is the bride-to-be," thought Dick; "well, she looks as though she were a good girl and a good worker."

They went on in and sat down in the sitting-room.

Mr. Hardy asked Dick a great many questions, all of which the youth answered as frankly as possible. Of course he did not tell the man what his business was until after he had made cautious inquiries and had learned that Mr. Hardy was patriotically inclined. Then he told him, in confidence, that he was looking for General Gates and the patriot army, and asked if he had heard of any strong force being seen anywhere in that part of the country.

"No," was the reply; "I hain't heerd uv no army be-in' seen in these parts."

"I understand that the British army is at Camden."

"Yas, I've heerd thet myself."

"You have never been there and seen the army?"

"No; I don' go thar very often."

The two talked perhaps half an hour, and then a boy of about fifteen or sixteen years entered the room.

"Thet's my boy, Bob," said Mr. Hardy; "this is Dick Slater, Bob."

"I'm glad ter know ye," said the boy.

"The same to you," replied Dick, as the two shook hands.

Presently supper was announced, and all took seats at the big table in the kitchen.

"Now, Mr. Slater, ye're welcome ter eat all ye want, as said the host; "but I'd advise yer not ter eat so much, thet ye won't be able ter do justice ter ther feast we've ter have in erbout three hours from now."

"All right," replied Dick. "I won't eat so much as to make it impossible for me to do justice to the feast."

He was blessed with a good appetite, however, and as the food before him, while plain, was well-cooked and palatable, he ate a very good meal.

As soon as supper was over the woman and the girl cleared up the table and washed and dried the dishes, after which they went to rooms upstairs—the loghouse being a story and a half high—and proceeded to dress for the wedding.

By the time they had dressed and come back downstairs the company began to arrive.

All the families in the neighborhood—six in number—were on hand, and all the members of each and every family were there.

There were children of all sizes, from babes in arms to buxom maidens of sixteen to twenty, and stalwart youths of the same ages.

All were intent on having an enjoyable time, and the talking was continuous and general.

Dick came in for considerable attention on the part of all.

He was a stranger, and this of itself was sufficient to make him an object of interest; and on top of that he was handsome and manly looking, and there was an air about him that impressed all. The youths were well-pleased with him, and the maidens seemed to like his looks also.

Bill Scroggins put in an appearance almost the last one, and he was a bashful looking fellow, though seemingly sensible and good-natured.

It was necessary that he should be good-natured, for the other youths began to joke him at once.

"Hello, Bill," said one.

"Er leetle late, hain't ye?" from another.

"Thort mebbe ye hed backed out."

"I wuz berginnin' ter think thet mebby I'd hev to take yer place myse'f," this from a really ugly, freckled, pug-nosed youth, who was something of a wag. "Sally allers did like me, ennyway, an' I berleeve she'd a-be'n jest erbout ez well satersfied."

The other youths, and the maidens as well, laughed heartily at this; and Bill Scroggins was sensible enough to laugh with the rest. Sally laughed, too, but it was plain that she did not enjoy it as thoroughly as some of the rest did.

"Thet's er good joke on ye, Bill," said another youth.

"Thet's right," from another; "ye hed better stick right heer, er Jim mought git Sally erway from ye yit."

"I'm goin' ter stay right heer," was the reply, amid the laughter of all.

"Say, hain't it erbout time ther preacher wuz comin'?" asked one of the women, addressing Mr. Hardy.

"Yas," was the reply; "I guess he'll be erlong purty soon."

Just then there came a knock on the door, and Mr. Hardy went and opened it.

"Ther preecher hez come!" were the words that went from mouth to mouth.

A thin, smooth-faced man, dressed in black, entered the room and bowed right and left, and said:

"Good-evening, brethern and sisters. I'm pleased to see you this evening."

All returned the greeting, and then the preacher took his seat and gazed about him at those present in a benevolent manner.

Reverend Harper seemed to be acquainted with all those present save Dick, and Mr. Hardy introduced him to the youth.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, young man," said the preacher, shaking the youth's hand.

"And I am glad to make your acquaintance," was the reply.

The conversation went on for half an hour or so, and then the preacher got ready to perform the ceremony.

Bill and Sally stepped out to the middle of the room, and the preacher took his place in front of them, and then he performed the ceremony, amid perfect silence on the part of the spectators.

As soon as the preacher had pronounced the two man and wife there was a rush from all sides, and the youth's hand was wrung until it ached, while the woman and girls kissed the bride. Congratulations were showered upon both.

"I sh'd think ye'd feel er whole lot better now, Bill," said one of the youths, with a grin. "Jim kain't git Sally erway frum ye."

"Thet's right; I do feel better," replied Bill, with an answering grin.

CHAPTER II.

A COUNTRY DANCE.

An hour was spent in talking and laughing, and then Mrs. Hardy, who had been in the kitchen, announced that the feast was ready.

All repaired to the kitchen. A table reaching the length of the room, nearly, was there, and it was loaded down with good things to eat.

By sitting rather close together all were enabled to take seats at the table. The preacher was given the post of honor at the head of the table.

There were plenty of good things, and Dick, especially,

enjoyed the feast. It was not often that he was fortunate enough to participate in a wedding feast, and he made the most of the opportunity.

All ate heartily, and there was a lot more of lively talk and laughter. The bride and groom sat near the head of the table, at the preacher's right hand, and they came in for a lot of good-natured badinage on the part of the rest. Even the preacher joked them a bit, but the two managed to take everything good-naturedly and even get back at the others with some jokes.

It was a lively, jolly, informal affair, and Dick enjoyed it hugely.

Just as they finished eating an old darcy put in an appearance, with an old fiddle in a bag. He was told to go into the kitchen and eat his supper, and he did so, after placing the bag and his old slouch hat in one corner out of the way.

He was half an hour, at least, eating his supper, and then he declared that he was so full he "didn't know whedder he c'u'd play de fiddle or not."

The young folks were eager to get to dancing, however, and Jim Jones told the old darcy to get his fiddle out.

"We mus' hev some music right erway," he declared; "we're ready ter dance, an' we don't wanter be kep' waitin'."

Dick was feeling pretty well acquainted with everybody now, and he asked one of the girls to dance with him. She was very willing to do so, for Dick was a much handsomer youth than her beau, who was only a shade or two better looking than homely Jim Jones.

Dave Bender was his name, and he was of rather a jealous temperament, so when some of the youths began to joke him slyly and tell him to look out that young fellow didn't get his sweetheart away from him he became savage.

"Don' ye fellers worry erbout me," he said. "I kin take keer of myself an' look out thet nobuddy don' git Mary erway frum me, too."

Fearing that they might get Dave worked up to the fighting pitch and cause him to make trouble with the young stranger, the other youths ceased to joke him.

Bender watched Dick and Mary Martin closely, however, and Dick noticed this and quickly understood matters.

"I'll have to be careful or I'll have a fight on my hands," he said to himself.

He was careful in his treatment of his partner in the dance. He was determined to get through the evening in an enjoyable manner, if possible.

When the dance was ended he led his partner to a seat and thanked her for the pleasure he had had in dancing with her. She smiled and told him that she was glad he had enjoyed himself; and then Bender was at her side, and she went on to the floor with him to dance the next set.

"Ye'll kinder hev ter lookout fer Dave," said Jim Jones, who happened to be standing by Dick's side. "He's kinder jealous-like uv everybuddy, an' I think he's spes-

shully jealous of ye, becos yer er stranger. He's purty bad when he gits his mad up."

"I noticed that he looked a bit displeased," said Dick; "I'll not ask his girl to dance with me again, as I wish to enjoy myself, and have no desire to get into trouble."

"Thet'll be er good plan, I think."

"He need not be at all alarmed, however," went on Dick. "I have a sweetheart of my own away up North, and no girl could turn me away from her."

"I'll tell Dave thet when I git er chanst, an I guess ez how et'll make him feel better."

When the set was ended and Dave had escorted his partner to a seat Jim Jones called him aside and told him that the young stranger had told him that he had a sweetheart up North. Dave's face cleared at once, and it was plain that he was greatly relieved.

He was more friendly to Dick after that, and affairs went on pleasantly.

The other youths did not seem to be at all jealous-hearted, and so Dick had no trouble at all in finding plenty of girls to dance with.

The dancing went on to the music of the old negro's fiddle until nearly midnight, and by this time some of the young folks were getting hungry again.

They went into the kitchen and, as the remains of the food on the table had been left standing, they ate some more, while talking and laughing and enjoying themselves.

Dick ate with the rest, and when they went back into the sitting-room the old negro asked to be permitted to go out and eat again.

"I'se been workin' pow'ful hawd, playin' de fiddle," he said; "an' Ah doan' see how I'se ter play enny moah 'nless I gits sumpin ter eat."

"But we want you to play," said Jim Jones, winking at some of the youths slyly; "you have had ernuff ter eat, Joe."

"No, I hain't had ernuff ter eat, neether."

"Go on and eat," said Dick; "I'll play in your place."

"T'ank you, massa," said the ducky; "I'se much er-bleeged ter ye."

Then he hastened into the kitchen and proceeded to help himself to the food on the table.

"Oh, can you play, Mr. Slater?" asked Jennie Sutter, who was Jim Jones' sweetheart.

"Yes, a little, Miss Jennie," was the reply; "get your partners, all, and I will furnish the music for you to dance by."

He went over to the corner and took up the fiddle and bow, and then drew the bow across the strings.

Instantly there was complete silence in the room, and Dick went ahead and played a sweet air with such expression that they were charmed. Instead of getting out on to the floor to dance to the music they sat and looked where they were, entranced by the wonderful playing of the youth.

They had never heard anything like it before, and they enjoyed the music immensely.

When Dick had finished all clapped their hands and urged him to play some more. He obeyed, and played a rollicking Southern plantation air with such liveliness that the old negro came to the doorway, and, chewing away at some baked chicken, listened with his eyes rolling in enjoyment.

"Say, dat's de bes' I evah heerd in all mah boan days!" he cried, when Dick had finished. "Uf I c'u'd play like dat I'd shoah not do ennyfing but play all de time."

"You'd stop long ernuff ter eat, wouldn't ye, Joe?" grinned Jim Jones.

"Yes, I guess ez how't I mought do dat."

"An' ter sleep," from another.

"Yes, I'd hab ter sleep some, ob course; but I'd take cat naps mos' ob de time."

All laughed at this, and Joe went back to get some more baked chicken.

"Get out on the floor," said Dick. "There is no use of wasting the music. You might as well be dancing to it."

"Thet's so," agreed Bill Scroggins, and the floor was soon occupied by the dancers.

Dick struck up a lively air, and the dancing began.

The music was so much better than what the negro had been furnishing that all enjoyed dancing much more than had been the case, and when the set was finished all thanked Dick for his kindness in playing.

"Joe has filled himself up with chicken now," said Jim Jones; "so let him play, an' ye git er gal an' come an' dance ther next set."

Dick was willing. His supper had settled sufficiently, so that he felt like dancing, and he soon secured a partner and was on the floor with the rest.

"Goodness sakes erlibe, seems as ef I hadn't oughter try fer ter play arter hearing dat young gemman play," said the ducky, with such a comical expression on his face that all had to laugh.

"Go on, Joe," said one; "when we git ter dancin' we won't hear ye, an' then it'll be all right."

So the negro started to play, and the dancing begun.

All was jollity for at least two hours, and then the dancing ceased. It was time to get home.

The old folks and the small children had gone home hours before, of course.

All shook hands with the bride and groom and wished them good luck and happiness; and then they shook hands with Dick and bade him good-by. They had not known him long, but they had taken quite a fancy to him.

The old ducky begged the privilege of shaking hands with Dick before going away.

"Mebbe it'll help me ter play de fiddle bettah," he said.

Dick laughed.

"I hardly think so, Joe," he said; "but if it would have any effect I would give you a good handshake."

"Et won' do no harm, massa, ennyhow," was the reply.

So Dick shook hands with the old ducky and he went away happy.

It was now nearly three o'clock, but the members of the Hardy family and Dick lay down and got some sleep before daylight.

"Next morning they did not feel much like eating breakfast. Two big suppers in one night were not conducive to hunger next morning.

"Waal, how did ye enj'y yerself las' night?" asked Mr. Hardy of Dick.

"First rate, sir," was the reply.

"I'm glad uv thet. Air ye goin' ter Camden this mornin'?"

"No, I don't think I will go there. I must find the patriot army under General Gates first."

"Ah, yes; thet's so."

Dick and Mr. Hardy went out to the stable, and the youth bridled and saddled his horse and led the animal out of the stable.

"I may come back here this evening, sir," he said.

"All right, Mr. Slater," was the cordial reply: "Make this yer home as long as ye like."

"I will do so. You see, I must first find the patriot army, and it may be within a few miles of here, and it may be three or four days' march away."

"Thet's so."

"And if it should come this way while I am gone tell the commander I will be back, and that I have a message for him from General Washington, will you?"

"Sartainly, Captain Slater."

"And my company of Liberty Boys will likely pass this way some time this afternoon. Please tell them to stop here and wait till I come."

"All right; I'll do et."

"Thank you."

Then Dick mounted and rode away.

CHAPTER III.

A BRUSH WITH THE BRITISH.

Dick rode eastward several miles.

Whenever he came to the top of a hill he paused and took a survey of the surrounding country.

He knew that if the patriot army was anywhere in the vicinity he would be enabled to see it.

He rode hither and thither until noon, and still had not seen any signs of the army.

He stopped at a farmhouse and ate dinner.

He inquired if any soldiers had been seen in the vicinity recently, and was told that a small force of redcoats had been seen that forenoon.

"How many were there in the party?" asked Dick.

"About twenty, I should say."

"Which way did they go?"

"They went north from here."

This was the direction Dick was going, but he had no fears of encountering the enemy, for it had been three hours, at least, since the redcoats had passed.

He rode northward and kept a sharp lookout as he went.

Presently he saw smoke ahead of him.

"I wonder if the timber is afire?" he asked himself.

He urged his horse forward at a gallop, and presently, on rounding a bend in the road he came in sight of a log cabin which was on fire.

In front of the cabin were a number of British soldiers, and Dick at once jumped to the conclusion that they had robbed the house and set it on fire.

The redcoats were looking at the burning cabin, so did not notice Dick, and he turned his horse and rode back around the bend out of sight.

Here he brought his horse to a stop and leaped to the ground.

He led his horse into the timber fifty yards or so and tied him to a tree.

Then he hastened in the direction of the burning cabin.

He succeeded in getting close enough to see what was going on without any trouble at all.

A man, a woman and two children, a boy and a girl, seemingly about ten and twelve years old, respectively, stood near the soldiers. The boy and girl were crying, and the woman was also in tears. There was a sober and angry look on the man's face, but of course he was helpless, and so had to stand there and watch his home burn down.

The soldiers stood there laughing and talking. They seemed to be well satisfied with their work.

"The man must be a patriot," thought Dick.

Occasionally some of the soldiers addressed remarks to the man, but Dick could not hear what was said.

How he wished that he could do something to bring about the discomfiture of the redcoats!

He was there alone, however; only one against twenty. He could not expect to do anything.

"Oh, if the Liberty Boys were only here," he thought.

But the Liberty Boys were not there.

Suddenly Dick heard the rattle of firearms.

Three or four of the redcoats fell to the ground, dead and wounded.

The shots sounded from the timber at the farther side of the house, from where Dick was concealed.

He judged by the sound that about eight or ten shots had been fired.

He could not think who the persons could be that had done the shooting, but he was determined to help the good work along if possible. So he drew his pistols and fired two shots, at the same time calling out, in a loud, ringing voice:

"Give it to them, boys! We have them surrounded, and they cannot escape."

This was too much for the troopers, and they broke and

fled to where their horses were standing, tied to the fence.

They untied the halter straps and leaped into the saddles and rode up the road at a gallop.

They were soon out of sight, and Dick at once left the shelter of the timber and made his way to the point where the little family stood looking at the burning cabin.

At the same time eight youths of about Dick's age emerged from among the trees at the farther side of the open space in which stood the cabin, and approached. They were clad in the homespun blue such as was worn by the country people of that region in those days.

The cabin was blazing at a lively rate, but there was a creek near by, and Dick felt sure that the fire could be extinguished.

"Let's get to work, all of us!" he cried. "Let's put the fire out!"

"There's buckets, but they're in the house," said the man.

Dick dashed into the house without a word and quickly returned, bringing two buckets.

Then the work of extinguishing the fire was begun.

It was a hard fight, for they had only the two buckets, and it was difficult work getting ahead of the flames, but this was accomplished at last, and by tearing off some of the clapboards they succeeded in putting the fire out.

The cabin looked as though it was ruined. It was smoke begrimed and blackened, and one could hardly believe, to look at it, that it would be habitable. Still, it was not much injured, so far as the interior was concerned.

The owner of the cabin looked inside the house, and then said, with a grin:

"Et's like a singed cat, better nor it looks."

"That's so, Mr. Hudson," said one of the youths. "It's fit to live in, even yet."

"Yas, so et is."

Dick proceeded to make the acquaintance of the youths, and he learned that they were young men of the neighborhood, the sons of patriots, and that they had organized a little party of Home Guards to protect the homes of the patriots, the redcoats having been doing considerable in the way of pillaging.

The youths had seen the smoke and had got together and hastened to the scene, arriving there just in time, as has been seen.

When Dick learned that the youths were patriots he told them who he was, and why he was there. Then he asked if they had seen anything of a large patriot force.

The youths said that they had not; but they expressed themselves as being delighted when they learned that a patriot army was coming down there to make an attack on the British at Camden.

One of the youths said that he had heard of the Liberty

Boys, and he was greatly delighted to make the acquaintance of Dick Slater, their captain.

Mr. Hudson, the owner of the cabin, thanked Dick and the neighboring youths for their timely aid, which had saved his home from being burned. His goods and provisions that had been taken out of the house were saved to him as well, for the redcoats had not tried to carry them away, in their haste to make their escape.

All went and examined the three redcoats that were lying on the ground where they had fallen when fired upon by the Home Guards. One was wounded, the other two being dead.

The wounded man was carried into the cabin, and Dick dressed his injury. It was painful and would keep him indoors a week or two, but was not really serious.

Then the youths buried the two dead troopers.

"Well, we did pretty well, I think, don't you, Captain Slater?" the leader of the youths, a bright young fellow by the name of Tom Morgan, asked.

"Yes; you did well," replied Dick.

Then Tom asked Dick what he was going to do.

"I am going to get my horse and go in search of the patriot army," was the reply.

"May we go along with you?"

"Yes, if you like."

"All right," with a pleased look; "and maybe we will run across another party of redcoats—or the same one that was here a little while ago."

"True; I am going to go north a ways, and then eastward."

Dick went to where he had left his horse, and was soon back at the cabin.

The youths at once scattered to go to their homes and get horses. They asked Dick to ride slowly, so that they could join him.

He said that he would do so; and then he mounted, bade good-by to Mr. and Mrs. Hudson and rode away.

He rode slowly, and fifteen minutes later the youths began putting in an appearance. By the time they had gone a mile all were with him.

Tom Morgan and Dick rode side by side, and the youth asked a number of questions about the war, all of which Dick answered, explaining matters.

"I'd like to be a soldier," said Tom, presently.

"Would you?"

"Yes. I would like to fight for the independence of the people of America."

"I think you are doing your part in getting up this Home Guard and protecting the homes of the patriots, Tom."

"Yes, but if the patriot army comes, and there is a battle, and the British go away, there will be no need of a home guard, and then I will have nothing to do."

"True; well, in that case, if you want to at that time, you may join my company of Liberty Boys. I need a few recruits."

"Thank you, Captain Slater."

"Call me Dick."

"All right, Dick."

"Say, I want to join the Liberty Boys, too," said another of the youths.

"And so do I," from still another.

All said the same, and so Dick told them that if there was a battle between the patriot and British armies and the British went away, so there would be no need of a Home Guard, they might join his company.

This pleased the youths greatly.

They kept a sharp lookout for the patriot army, and also for the force of British troopers that had ridden northward, but did not see anything of either.

At last they turned back, for Dick knew he must do so, if he were to get back to the Hardy home by night-fall.

The youths stopped when the vicinity of their homes was reached, and they told Dick that they would watch for the coming of the patriot army.

"All right; I shall be glad to have you do so," the youth replied.

Then he rode rapidly onward in the direction of the Hardy home.

He arrived there just at sundown, and was delighted to find his company of Liberty Boys encamped near the house.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARING ESCAPE.

"Yer Liberty Boys are heer, Captain Slater," said Mr. Hardy, as Dick rode up.

"So I see, sir," replied Dick; "and I am glad of it."

Then he went and joined the youths.

They greeted him enthusiastically.

"Did you see anything of the patriot army, Dick?"

asked Bob Estabrook, who was second in command of the Liberty Boys. They had been raised together, so to speak, both having lived on adjoining farms all their lives, up in Westchester county, New York.

"No; I didn't see any signs of the patriot army, Bob."

"I wonder what has delayed it?"

"I don't know."

"It ought to have been here by this time."

"Yes, so I should judge."

"I don't see what can have kept it from getting here."

"Neither do I; it may be that bad roads, which would make marching slow and difficult, may account for it."

"That is possible."

Mr. Hardy came to the encampment and told Dick that supper was ready.

"I guess that I will stay here and take camp fare with the boys," replied Dick.

"No, you won't do anything of the kind," said Mark

Morrison; "because we can't all go into the house and eat good fare is no reason that you shouldn't. So go right along."

"Yes, go on, Dick," from Bob.

So Dick went to the house and ate supper, although it was under protest, as it were.

After supper he went back to the encampment and had a talk with the youths.

It was decided that the Liberty Boys should scatter over the surrounding country on the morrow, and keep a sharp lookout for the expected patriot army.

Dick got to thinking that it would be a good plan if he could enter Camden and size up the British army there, and after giving the matter considerable thought he made up his mind that he would make the attempt to do this.

He went to Mr. Hardy's house and entered.

"I want to go down into Camden this morning," he said; "have you any provisions that you could sell to the British? If so your son and myself could load them into a wagon and go down into Camden, and while disposing of the provisions I could use my eyes and size up the situation, and learn how strong the enemy is."

"Yes, thar is er lot uv stuff in ther way of meat an' perlaters an' things like thet thet ye could take down thar an' sell," was the reply.

"Good! Then we will do that very thing in the morning."

Bob Hardy was sitting there, and when he learned that he was to go down to Camden with Dick Slater he was delighted.

He could scarcely sleep at all that night, he was so excited.

He was up bright and early next morning and had the horses harnessed before breakfast was ready.

When Dick appeared to take breakfast with the Hardys the boy told him that the horses were ready to hitch to the wagon.

"All right," smiled Dick. "Then we will be able to get an early start."

After breakfast was over they went out and loaded the meat, potatoes and other articles into the wagon; and then the horses were hitched to the wagon and the Liberty Boys and his friend were ready to start.

The Liberty Boys, acting under Dick's orders, had already mounted and taken their departure, scattering over the country to look for the patriot army.

General Gates and the patriot force should have been there ere this, but as Dick had said the evening before, in talking to Bob, the chances were that bad roads had retarded the progress of the army.

Dick and Bob Hardy got into the wagon and drove away toward Camden.

Dick had borrowed some old clothing of Mr. Hardy, who was about his size, and he looked like a farmer boy of the period.

He did not think that there would be much danger

that he would be recognized by any British soldier, for he had done most of his work in the North, and was not known to the soldiers of the South.

The two were two hours and a half in reaching Camden, and when they came to the edge of the place they were halted by a sentinel.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Farmer boys," replied Dick.

"What have you got in the wagon?"

"Provisions to sell to your soldiers."

"Oh, that's it, eh?"

"Yes."

"What kind of provisions?"

"Meat, potatoes and things like that."

"All right; go on into town."

"Thank you."

The youths drove on and were soon in the town.

On all sides were the white tents of the soldiers, and many of them were quartered in the residences of the people of the town.

The wagon was soon surrounded by a great crowd of British troops, all eager to buy provisions.

"What have you to sell?" asked one.

Dick told him.

"Give me some meat and potatoes."

The youth did so, and when he had named a price the money was handed over to him.

The two were kept busy handing the provisions out to the soldiers and receiving the money for them, but it did not take long to finish their work, and then the two rested and looked about them.

"You must have a big army," said Dick, to one of the soldiers.

"Yes, pretty big," was the reply.

"About how many men have you?" the youth asked. He was a good actor, and he looked so innocent and unconcerned while asking this important question that the soldier did not suspect that the questioner was asking for any reason other than mere curiosity.

So he told how many men there were in the army, and Dick made a mental note of it.

"Say, let's go out and look around some," said the boy, and Dick was willing. He said to the soldier he had just been talking to:

"I suppose there can be no objections to our taking a look around?"

"Oh, certainly not," was the reply.

The boys leaped out of the wagon, tied their horses to a post, and walked slowly around, looking at the place with interest.

In Bob Hardy's case it was genuine interest. It was the first army he had ever seen and the first encampment he had ever visited, and it could not but interest him.

Dick's interest was of another kind. That is to say, he was more interested in the arrangement of the camp, and its defenses, etc. The sight of a big encampment was no novelty to him.

When they had made the rounds and seen everything there was to be seen they went back, untied their horses, and climbed into the wagon.

There were a lot of soldiers standing around, and one of these suddenly caught sight of Dick's face, and gave utterance to an exclamation.

"Dick Slater, the rebel spy, as I live!"

The other soldiers stared at the speaker and then at Dick in wondering amazement. They did not seem to know what to think.

The soldier in question was one who had recently come down there from the North as a messenger from General Clinton to General Cornwallis, and he had seen Dick on one or two occasions and now recognized him.

Dick realized instantly that he was in great danger.

If captured he would in all probability be shot or hanged as a patriot spy.

Seizing the lines, he whipped up the horses, and they went dashing up the street.

The soldiers scattered, the majority of them thinking the horses were running away. Not many had heard what the soldier had said.

Now, however, he set up a great cry:

"Stop him!" he yelled. "Don't let him get away! He is Dick Slater, the rebel spy!"

Others took up the cry now, and soon the air was filled with shouts.

Then an attempt was made to close in upon the team and wagon, but the horses were strong and vigorous, and were running at the top of their speed, and those of the soldiers who had courage to try to stop the animals were knocked down and trampled on for their pains.

"Stop him! Stop the spy!" was the cry.

"Stop, or we will shoot you down!" from others.

Dick realized that the redcoats would fire upon them soon, unless they succeeded in getting the horses stopped, and so he told Bob to lie down in the wagon bed, and the boy obeyed. Dick watched the redcoats closely, and presently he saw some of them leveling muskets.

He dropped at full length in the wagon bed, then, and scarcely had he done so before there came the crack, crack of the weapons.

Several bullets whistled over the top of the wagon bed, and one or two spatted against it, but luckily neither of the two hit.

The horses were running wild now, as it was impossible for Dick to guide them.

The soldiers yelled excitedly, and this only frightened the animals the more, and they continued on their mad career.

"Shoot the horses!" some one yelled; but this had been thought of too late. The horses had reached the edge of the town and were striking into the country, and were out of range.

A number of shots were fired, but none of them reached the mark aimed at.

Dick raised his head and looked back.

He could hardly believe it possible that they had succeeded in getting out of the encampment, but such was the case.

He saw a number of troopers mounting their horses in hot haste, however, and knew that the danger was not yet over, by any means.

"They are coming in pursuit of us," he said; "well, I must not let them capture me, come what may."

He turned to his companion.

"Bob," he said, "I am going to jump out of the wagon and take to the timber for safety; you bring the horses down to an ordinary gait and keep them going that way."

"All right, Dick; but won't the redcoats capture me?"

"No; tell them that you are a farmer boy, and that you didn't know who I was; that I got into the wagon a mile from town as you were coming in, and I don't think that they will bother you."

"All right; I'll do it."

Bob brought the team down to a trot, and then Dick leaped out and entered the timber, saying as he did so: "I'll be at your house before noon."

The boy nodded and then watched the approaching troopers.

They were quickly up with him, and ordered him to stop.

He did so, and being only a boy and unused to such experiences he was greatly frightened.

"D-don't s-shoot!" he faltered, as the troops leveled their muskets at him.

HOWARD J. RICHARDS,
NEW CITY, N.Y.

CHAPTER V.

TWO BOLD FORAGERS.

"I hain't done ennythin'!" Bob shouted.

"You are our prisoner!" the leader of the redcoats said, with great sternness.

"What d'ye want to make me a prisoner fur?" the boy asked.

"Because you are a friend and confederate of that rebel spy, Dick Slater."

"No, I hain't."

"You are; you brought him into the encampment on purpose so he could spy on us."

"No, I didn't. I never saw him until I was pretty near to town, this mornin', an' he come out of ther timber an' wanted ter go ter town with me. I didn't think ennythin' erbout et, an' so I let him go with me, an' he said he would help me sell ther provisions, an' so I let him. That's all I know erbout him."

The leader of the redcoats, a captain, looked at the youth searchingly.

"Is that so?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Yas."

"Where do you live?"

"'Bout ten miles frum here."

"What is your name?"

"Bob Hardy."

"And you are not a rebel?"

"No, sir."

"What is your father, a rebel or a loyalist?"

"I dunno."

The captain pondered a few moments, looked at the boy searchingly and thoughtfully, and then said:

"I guess you are telling the truth; you may go."

"Thank ye, sir," said the boy, delightedly.

He drove onward and the troopers turned back.

Meanwhile Dick was being pursued by scores of redcoats on foot.

They pursued him as rapidly as possible, but in the timber they were no match for him.

He could outrun them under any circumstances, and he was such an expert at woodcraft that they did not have any chance when it came to a race through the woods.

He bore toward the north and kept on going as rapidly as possible, for he thought it might be that he could get back to the road and be there when Bob came along with the wagon. He knew the redcoats would catch up with the boy and delay him.

He struck the road at a point a mile and a half from where the redcoats had stopped the boy, and had to wait nearly ten minutes before Bob put in an appearance.

When Dick stepped out into the road the boy was surprised, but delighted as well, and when Dick had climbed in and seated himself the boy asked:

"How did ye manage ter git heer erhead uv me?"

"By running, Bob."

"Hain't ye tired?"

"Not very."

"Ye must be er mighty good runner."

"I am."

Then Dick asked the boy what the redcoats had said, and he told the youth.

"I didn't think they would bother you," said Dick.

They arrived at Bob's home about eleven o'clock, and Bob had a wonderful story to tell his folks when they were eating dinner.

The folks were greatly interested, and listened eagerly to the boy's story.

Bill Scroggins and Sally were there, but they were going to their own home on the morrow.

After dinner Dick mounted his horse and rode away toward the north and east.

He didn't suppose that he could do anything more than was being done in the way of finding the expected patriot army, but he wished to be moving. He could not content himself to sit down and remain quiet.

He rode hither and thither, and about the middle of the afternoon he came to the home of the Hudsons.

He stopped here and was given a hearty welcome.

"Have you seen any of the Liberty Boys to-day?" asked Dick.

"Yas, theer wuz some uv them heer this afternoon."

"They had not seen anything of the patriot army?"

"No."

The youth talked awhile longer and then rode onward.

He was hailed when passing a house a mile or so farther on, and when he looked in the direction from which the voice sounded he saw Tom Morgan, the leader of the Home Guards.

"How are you, Captain Slater?" the youth greeted.

"How are you, Tom?" was the reply.

"I am all right; are you still watching for the coming of the patriot army?"

"Yes."

"It certainly will be along before long."

"I hope so."

They talked awhile longer, and then Dick rode onward.

An hour later he met Bob and some more of the Liberty Boys. They had given up their search for the day and were on their way back to the Hardy home.

"There is no need that we shall go clear back to the Hardy's," said Dick; "we will go into camp near the home of Tom Morgan."

It did not take them long to get back there, and then they went into camp.

This was on the main road leading to the Hardy home, and on into Camden, so the Liberty Boys would all pass there in returning to the Hardy home.

They kept coming in groups of six or ten, and were presently all on hand. Of course they paused and went into camp along with the rest of their comrades.

When they had made the encampment snug and had settled down two parties were sent out to secure food.

A number of smaller detachments, consisting of from two to four Liberty Boys, went out also, to see what they could secure to eat.

One of those little parties consisted of a Dutch youth by the name of Carl Gookenspieler and an Irish youth named Patsy Brannigan.

These two usually kept together in camp and on the march, everywhere, in fact.

They moved through the timber slowly, talking in low voices, and at last they came out in a clearing of about ten acres in extent. It was dark now, but the youths knew that there was someone living there, for otherwise there would not have been any clearing. Over toward the farther side of the clearing they saw a light, which showed where the house was.

"Come along, Dutchy," half whispered Patsy; "shure an' we'll soon have our hands on some chickens, dooks, turkeys, or somethin' like thot."

"So ve vill, Batsy," was the reply; "you vill mit me go, und ve vill some uf dem shickens haf, und dot is so."

They stole across the clearing and were soon at the house.

They peered in through the window and saw the family sitting at the table eating supper.

"Say, thot supper if afther lookin' good, I dunno!" whispered Patsy.

"Yah, dot is der vact," from Carl.

There was a brief silence, and then Patsy said:

"Say, Dootchy, Oi have a skame."

"Vat is der sgame, Batsy?"

"It is dhis: We wull go out by dhe stable an' fire off our pistols, an' whin dhe man comes runnin' out to see phwat dhe throuble is, we wull run into dhe house an' grab iverythin' in soight, an' git erway ag'in; phwat d'yez say?"

"I don'd vos know aboud dot, Batsy," was the reply; "I t'ink id vould pe petter vor us to hellup oursellufs to some uf der shickens or dooks, und go away midout any of dose disturbances maging, eh?"

"Mebby yez are roight; but Oi'd loike to ghet at thim t'ings on dhe thable in dhere."

"Und so vould mineselluf, but I t'ink id petter to nod dake so mooch riskiness."

"All roight; kim along an' we wull see phwat we kin foind in dhe chickenhouse."

They stole away, and quickly came upon a log building standing only a few yards from the house.

This was evidently the smokehouse, where meat was kept, and the two bold foragers decided to get a couple of hams while they were at it.

They opened the door and entered, and began feeling around.

They quickly found the hams, which were tied to the rafters, and helped themselves to a couple.

Then they went out and began looking for the chickenhouse.

It did not take them long to find it, and they opened the door and entered, first depositing their hams on the ground beside the door.

Poles had been laid across from side to side of the chickenhouse for the chickens to roost on, and in feeling around Carl accidentally knocked one of the poles down. There were at least half a dozen chickens on the pole, and as it went down, dropping them to the floor, they set up a great squawking, as frightened chickens will.

To the youths, who were right in the midst of the uproar, the squawking sounded louder than the roar of cannon.

"Lit's be afther gittin' out av dhis," cried Patsy; "dhe farmer'll be out here wid his roifle in a minnet, an' he'll fill us oop wid bullets, begorra!"

"Come mit me," cried Carl; "ve vill git ouid uf here mit mooch quickness."

They ran toward the door, and in doing so ran together and fell down, Carl falling on one of the chickens and killing it instantly.

"Ouch!" cried Patsy.

"Ow-w-w!" from Carl; "I haf mineselluf hurt, und dot is so!"

"Oh, ye're not afther bein' hurted, Dootchy," was the reply; "oop wid yez, an' run fur yer loife."

"Don'd I know when I haf been hurt, Batsy Prannigan!" said Carl, angrily, as he slowly rose to his feet.

"Mebby so; but don't sthoph to talk; come along wid yez!"

"I vos peen goming righd along."

The chickens were still squawking, and the two were forced to talk loudly to make themselves heard. Now they started to leave the chicken-house, only to find themselves confronted by the owner, who stood there with a leveled rifle in his hands. Just behind him stood a boy of ten or twelve years, holding a lantern so that the light fell upon the open doorway, in which stood Carl and Patsy.

"Ha, I have you now, you rascally chicken thieves!" the farmer cried.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ARMY APPEARS.

"Shure an' it do be lookin' thot way," said Patsy, a comical look on his face.

"Yah, you haf god us, dot is righd," agreed Carl.

"Who are you, anyway?" the farmer asked.

"Shure an' we are a couple of frien's av your'n, an' we wur comin' to call on yez an' pay our respects," said Patsy, with great gravity; "but it sames thot we mistook dhe house an' got in dhe wrong b'ildin'."

"Oh, you liar!" the man exclaimed.

"Dot vos peen der trut' vat Batsy vos speagin'," said Carl; "ve vos gomin' to call mit you, und got in der shicken-house instead uv der house vere you lif."

"That will do to tell," said the farmer, sternly; "you are lying, and I know it, for you have been in the smoke-house as well, and have stolen a couple of hams. There they are on the floor."

The youths looked at the hams and tried to look surprised, but it was a difficult matter for them to do so; they were not very good actors.

"How did dhe hams be afther ghettin' dhere, Carl?" asked Patsy.

"Id vos mineselluf vat don't could tolded dot," was the reply.

"Well, I can tell you," said the farmer, sternly; "you two fellows stole the hams out of the smokehouse, and you were going to steal some chickens, if I hadn't come in time to put a stop to it."

"Vell, der chickens haf gotted der pest uf id," said Carl, with a grin; "dey haf scared der life halluf ouid uf me, und dot is so."

"Phwat are yez goin' to do wid us?" asked Patsy.

"I am going to make you prisoners," was the reply; "and to-morrow I will see what to do with you."

"Vill ve haf some suppers?" asked Carl.

"No; you will have to go hungry."

The Dutch boy gave utterance to a terrible groan.

"I vos peen halluf starved," he said; "I vill pe deat pe fore do-mqrrrow."

"An' so wull Oi," from Patsy; "begorra, Oi haf rode dhe hull afthernoon widout a boite to ate, an' it's hoongry Oi am afther bein'."

"Tell me who you are," said the farmer; "and where do you live?"

"Sure an' we air sojer byes," said Patsy.

"Soldier boys?"

"Yis."

"Yah. Ve peen solcher poys."

"What army do you belong to?"

"Phwat arrumy are yez afther wantin' to foight fur?" asked Patsy, cautiously.

"Yah, dot is vhat ve vould lige to know."

"I don't care about fighting for either; but if anything, I am in favor of the patriot cause."

"We air mighty glad to hear thot," said Patsy; "we are afther bein' patriots oursilves."

"Yah, ve peen der pest batriots vat you haf nefer seen."

"Where is the army you belong to?"

"About a moile frum here, sor."

"How big an army is it?"

"It is not in reality an arrumy, sor; it is a company uv horse sojers, sor, known as dhe Liberty Byes."

The man started.

"I have heard of the Liberty Boys," he said.

Patsy and Carl felt better. The tone and air of the man implied that he was favorably impressed by what he had heard regarding the Liberty Boys, and they drew themselves up and looked as important as they could.

"O'm a Liberty Bye," said Patsy, with dignity.

"Und so vos I peen ein Lipperty Poy," said Carl, proudly.

"Well, that alters things somewhat," said the farmer; "if you two are patriot soldiers and belong to the Liberty Boys I am willing to let you go free."

"Und may we dake der hams, sir?" asked Carl.

"Shure, an' yez'll be doin' a mighty good t'ing av ye do let us take dhe hams," said Patsy; "dhe byes are mighty hoongry, so dhey are."

"Yah, dey vos peen so hoongry as vat I am, und dot is all vat need pe saided."

The farmer had lowered his gun.

"Come into the house," he invited; "we have just finished eating supper, but there is plenty of good food on the table, and you may have all you can eat."

"It's mesilf won't do thot same, unless ye prommus to lit us take dhe hams to dhe byes in camp," said Patsy. "Oi could not t'ink of atin' a good supper an' go back to me comrades, who are hoongry an' widout much to ate."

"Und dot is der same vay mit mineselluf," said Carl.

"I'll tell you what I will do," said the farmer; "you two come in and eat your suppers, and then I will give you the hams and a couple of chickens, as well, to take to camp with you."

"Thot's dhe talk!" from Patsy, delightedly.

"Yah, dot is so!" from Carl.

They were delighted, and accompanied Mr. Sands—such was the farmer's name—into the house, where they were given seats at the table.

Mrs. Sands put a couple of clean plates on the table, and the two went to work with a will. They were hungry, and ate heartily.

The boy, Ben Sands, watched the two with interest. They were the first soldiers he had ever seen, and he could hardly make up his mind that they were soldiers, because of the fact that they did not have uniforms on. His idea was that soldiers must always wear uniforms.

When they had finished eating the youths thanked Mr. Sands for their supper, and said that they must be getting back to camp.

"How far is it, did you say?" asked the boy.

"Abhout a moile," replied Patsy.

"May I go with you? I want to see a real soldiers' camp."

"Av coorse," was the reply.

In order to have some excuse, other than mere curiosity, the boy carried a ham. Patsy and Carl each carried a ham and two chickens.

"Shure, an' dhe byes wull be deloighted whin dhey see us comin'!" said Patsy.

"Yah, dot is so," from Carl.

They bade Mr. Sands and his wife good-by and took their departure.

Half an hour later they arrived at the encampment.

They were given the most joyous reception imaginable. The Liberty Boys who had remained in the camp were glad to see such an addition to the commissary department.

"Where did you get the hams and chickens, boys?" asked Dick.

"At dhe home av dhis bye here," said Patsy, indicating Ben Sands.

"What is your name?" asked Dick, patting the boy on the shoulder.

Ben told him.

"Well, Ben, when you go back home tell your father that the Liberty Boys are much obliged to him for the hams and chickens."

"I'll tell him, sir." Then the boy looked at Dick earnestly, and said:

"Are you Captain Dick Slater?"

Dick nodded assent.

"Yes, my boy, that is my name," he said.

"I've heard father tell about you. He says you are the most famous spy in the patriot army."

Dick smiled.

"I have done some work in that line," he acknowledged;

"though there are others who have done just as good work, I feel sure."

The boy talked to the youths, who answered his questions with good-natured promptitude, while at work frying ham and cooking the chickens. They considered that, as the son of the man who had given them the food, the boy was entitled to some consideration.

Ben remained in the camp an hour or more, and then went back home.

"Well, what do you think of the Liberty Boys?" asked Mr. Sands.

"I like them, father," was the reply.

"Do you?"

"Yes. They are nice young fellows."

"They are certainly brave," was the reply. "They have done wonderful work for the cause of independence during the past three or four years."

Tom Morgan and two or three of the Home Guard youths visited the Liberty Boys' encampment that evening, getting there soon after Ben Sands had gone.

Dick gave them a cordial greeting, as did all the youths, as soon as they learned who and what the strangers were.

"We have come to say again that we want to join your company of Liberty Boys after the battle between the patriot and British armies," said Tom Morgan; "and if you will let us, we want to be with you in the battle."

"I am willing," said Dick.

This pleased the youths immensely, and Tom said they would be on hand when the time came.

"When do you think General Gates' army will get here?" he asked.

"I look for it to appear at any hour," was the reply.

"Well, I hope it will come soon."

"So do I."

The Home Guard youths took their departure presently, and the Liberty Boys lay down and went to sleep, guards having been placed out.

Next morning the Liberty Boys were up bright and early.

They had enough food left to do them for breakfast, and they ate this and then bridled and saddled their horses and rode away.

They divided up into small parties, and scattering in several directions, went to keep watch for the coming of the patriot army under General Gates.

Dick and Bob and half a dozen of the youths remained together and rode northward and then eastward.

About the middle of the forenoon they paused on a hill and took a look around.

At first they saw no signs of the patriot army.

They remained there half an hour, however, having dismounted the while, and then, as they were mounting, Bob gave utterance to an exclamation. He had been the first in the saddle, and had looked toward the east, after which he gave vent to an exclamation.

"I see it! General Gates and the patriot army are coming!"

All were excited and leaped into their saddles and looked in the direction indicated by Bob.

Sure enough, far away, just coming into view up the road from the east, was the head of what was surely a column of marching soldiers.

"It is the patriot army, sure enough!" cried Dick.

"Yes; there can be no doubt regarding that," said Mark Morrison.

"The battle with the British at Camden is not far away now!" said Bob, his eyes shining delightedly.

"Shall we go and meet them?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Yes," replied Dick; "come along, all!"

The youths urged their horses down the hill at a gallop.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LIBERTY BOYS ARE HAPPY.

"Are you General Gates?"

"I am."

"I am Dick Slater, captain of the Liberty Boys, and I have recently arrived in this vicinity from the North. I have a message here from the commander-in-chief."

"Very well, Captain Slater; let me have the message."

The Liberty Boys had met the patriot army, and Dick had been directed to where General Gates and his staff had halted, near a farmhouse, to get some water.

Dick had ridden up to the general and the above conversation had ensued.

The Liberty Boy drew the letter from his pocket and handed it to General Gates, who took it and opened it and read it.

"Humph!" he muttered, when he had finished. Then he thrust the letter into his coat pocket and looked at Dick with some curiosity.

"So you are Captain Dick Slater," he said.

"Yes, sir; and General Washington sent me down here with my Liberty Boys to help you fight Cornwallis and his army."

"I don't think you will be able to help me very much," was the reply, in almost a sneering voice; "if General Washington wished to send me help, why did he not send me someone else besides a pack of boys?"

Dick colored underneath the coating of tan.

He recognized the sneer, and while his feelings were hurt, he was angered as well. Still, he did not dare show his feelings to a superior officer, so he simply said, as calmly as possible:

"Perhaps we may be of some assistance, sir. General Washington must have thought so, or else he would not have sent us."

"I understand that the commander-in-chief has made a favorite of you, and no doubt it has spoiled you somewhat," curtly.

"I don't know regarding that, sir; all I know is that I have always done my best to obey orders and to make a success of whatever I undertook."

"Humph!"

There was a sneer in the exclamation, and again Dick flushed slightly.

He had heard that General Gates was a rather gruff, self-important man, but had never met him before. He made up his mind that the truth had doubtless been told about the general.

"I dislike the idea of having to work under such a man," he told himself; but he made up his mind to do his full duty, just as thought he liked the commander.

At this moment another officer came riding up. He was a man of gigantic size, and Dick wondered who he could be. He listened eagerly, and heard General Gates address the newcomer as Baron de Kalb.

Then Dick knew who the officer was. He had heard of Baron de Kalb, and knew him, by reputation, to be one of the bravest and best of patriot officers.

General Gates explained to the newcomer who Dick and his comrades were, and told about receiving the message from the commander-in-chief.

"There is nothing of importance in the message," he said; "General Washington simply said for me to do what I was already intending to do, so we will go right ahead."

He told Dick to ride beside him, as he wished to ask some questions, and Dick said:

"Very well, sir."

Baron de Kalb shook the youth's hand when informed who the youth was.

"I am very glad to make your acquaintance," he said.

"And I am very glad to make your acquaintance, sir," was the reply.

"I believe you have been in this vicinity a short time, Captain Slater," said General Gates.

"Yes, sir."

"How far south and west have you been?"

"I have been in Camden, sir."

Both of the officers uttered exclamations of astonishment.

"You have been in the British encampment, you say?" from General Gates.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you learn the strength of the enemy?"

"Approximately, yes."

"How many men have the British?"

Dick told him.

"That is more than I thought they had," said Baron de Kalb.

"Yes, they are stronger than I thought," agreed General Gates; "but Lord Rawdon is not much of a general, and I think we can beat him without much trouble."

"Lord Rawdon is not in command there, sir," said Dick.

"He is not?" in surprise.

"No, sir."

"Who is?"

"General Cornwallis."

"Is that the case, sure enough?" asked the general.

"Yes, sir."

"You saw him?"

"No; but the soldiers told me that he was in command there."

"That puts a different face on the matter, General Gates," said Baron de Kalb.

"So it does," soberly. It was evident that General Gates had high respect for the generalship of Cornwallis.

Then he asked a number of questions about the country in the vicinity of Camden, and about the character of the roads leading to the town. Dick answered all the questions promptly, and in such a manner as to give the best possible information.

At noon a stop was made to eat dinner and let the soldiers rest.

They were weak, many of them, from lack of food. The road traversed by the army in coming had led through a sparsely settled region, and it was hard to secure enough provisions to keep the men in marching trim.

When the hour was up the march was resumed.

It was slow work, but this could not be avoided.

Dick calculated the length of time it would take the patriot army to reach Camden, and found that at the rate it was traveling it would be three days in reaching the Hardy home, ten miles from Camden.

He decided to go back and keep watch of the British as best he could, and see to it that the small parties who came out into the country did not do a great deal of damage to the patriot homes.

He told General Gates what he thought of doing, and the General said for him to go along.

He said it in such a manner as led Dick to believe that he did not think that the Liberty Boys could do very much.

"That is all right, General Gates," said the youth to himself; "we may get a chance to show you what we can do on a field of battle within a few days' time, and then perhaps you may change your opinion regarding us."

He saluted, as did the other Liberty Boys, and then they rode forward at a gallop. They encountered some more of the Liberty Boys a couple of miles away, and told them the glad news, that the patriot army was coming.

"Hurrah!" cried several.

They went back to the vicinity of the Hudson home and went into camp for the night.

All the youths felt happy, on account of the fact that the patriot army was approaching the vicinity.

It meant that there would be a battle in a comparatively short time.

"I feel happy enough to dance," said Bob Estabrook.

"And so do I!"

"And I!"

Such were the exclamations from the youths, and Tom

Morgan, who happened to enter the encampment at that moment, asked what all the excitement was about.

"The patriot army is coming, Tom," said Dick.

The youth's face lighted up.

"Is that so?" he exclaimed; "I am glad."

"Yes; and that is what is making the boys so happy. They were just saying that they were happy enough to dance."

Tom started, and looked thoughtful for a few moments.

"Say, why can't they dance, then?" he asked.

"They haven't anybody to dance with, save themselves, and there wouldn't be any fun in that."

"I can get a crowd of young people together in two hours," said Tom; "and we can have a dance."

"Hurrah!" cried Bob Estabrook; "do that, Tom, and we will all love you like a brother all the days of your life!" and he seized Tom around the waist and went waltzing around, till they both tripped over Patsy's legs and fell on top of Carl Gookenspieler, almost smashing the life out of him. Needless to say, Bob, who delighted to have fun with Carl, did this on purpose.

"Ow-w-w-w-w! Oo-oo-oo-oo-oh!" grunted Carl; and then, as the two rolled off him and he got his breath he gasped out:

"I vas—peen—ein—deat man,—und dot is so!"

"G'wan wid yez, Cookyspieler," said Patsy Brannigan; "it would be afther takin' more than thot to kill yez; yez are too tough, altogether."

"Oh, but I haf peen all vlattened ould!" groaned Carl, feeling of himself, gingerly.

The Liberty Boys laughed heartily. The look on the fat Dutch youth's face was even more funny than his words.

"Oh, you are not hurt, Dutchy," said Mark Morrison.

"Say, if Carl was to be really flattened out he would do to use for a tent-cloth," said Bob Estabrook.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Patsy Brannigan; "thot's so! Thot's dhe thruth, so it is; if iver dhe thruth tould! A tint-cloth yez would be, Cookyspieler—ha, ha, ha!"

"Vere is der donkey vat is laughing such muchness?" said Carl, looking around, as though to see if a donkey were near. "Oh, id is you, is id, Batsy Praningan?" he added, looking at that worthy. "I vos t'inkin' dot id vos ein donkey vat vos laughin', und it vos you; oh—haw, haw, haw!" and he pointed his finger at the Irish youth.

"Don't yez dare to call mesilf a donkey, Cookyspieler!" cried Patsy belligerently; "av yez do, Oi'll be afther knockin' dhe two oyes av yez into wan; so Oi wull!"

He started toward the Dutch youth, who doubled up his fists and seemed ready to fight; but Bob Estabrook pushed Patsy back, and said:

"Sit down and keep still, Patsy. We are going to have a dance to-night, and you and Carl mustn't spoil our fun by fighting."

"All roight, Bob; Oi'll shake hands wid him an' call it awen, av he wull," and he extended his hand, which Carl grasped and shook heartily.

"I haf been villing to gall it evenness mit der two both uf us," he said.

"Shall I start out and get the young folks to come, Dick?" asked Tom Morgan.

"Yes; go along, Tom; but where will we dance?"

"In Mr. Hudson's house. He has plenty of room." Then Tom hastened away.

HOWARD J. RICHARDS, NEW CITY, N. Y. CHAPTER VIII.

THE YOUTHS ENJOY THEMSELVES.

The Liberty Boys were delighted by the prospect of getting to indulge in dancing that night.

They were young and full of life, and naturally liked to enjoy themselves.

They were camped within a quarter of a mile of Mr. Hudson's house, and so would be right there when it came time for the fun to begin.

"We will all enjoy ourselves dancing, with the exception of Patsy and Carl," said Bob, mischievously. "They can't dance, so will have to sit and watch the rest of us."

"Shure an' Oi kin dance loike iverythin'," said Patsy, quickly; "whin it comes to thot, Oi don' stand back fur no-buddy."

"Und dot is der same vay by minesellufs," said Carl; "I have tanced all mine life, und dot is so."

"Shure an' Oi guiss yez have danced whin yer fadther er mither wur afther yez wid a switch," grinned Patsy.

"Dot is nod so; mine fader und mutter haf nefer peen after me mit ein switch."

"Thin dhey must have took dhe horsewhip to yez," with a grin.

"Nein; dot is nod der trut'."

"Oh, Carl and Patsy must have their fun the same as rest of us," said Dick.

"Thot's right," nodded Patsy; "av Oi don't be afther vin' it, thin it's mesilf would mutiny, Oi dunno."

"Und so vould I some mutinies mage," from Carl. The other youths laughed.

An hour later they went to the house and found about dozen youths and maidens already there.

"Theer be a lot more heer afore long," said a youth whom Dick recognized as being a member of the Home Guards.

"That is good," said Dick.

Of course the youths could not all get into the house, but as it was a warm night in August it was really more comfortable out of doors. It was the intention of the Liberty Boys to stay out in the yard, and only those who were dancing were to be in the house at any one time.

The young folks kept coming, and soon about twenty girls and as many youths were there. Tom Morgan put in an appearance, and with him came an old fellow with a fiddle under his arm.

"Get in there and get to playing, Jeffers," said Tom; "the boys are eager to get to dancing."

"All right, Tom," was the reply, and the youth then turned to Dick, and said:

"There are so many of you Liberty Boys that it will not be worth while trying to introduce you to the girls; I'll explain the matter to them, and you can come in, about sixteen at a time, and dance a set, and then come out again and let another lot come in."

"All right," said Dick; "that will simplify matters."

So the dancing began. Four sets were going at the same time to the music of the old fiddle, and the young folks had a lively time of it.

The youths of the vicinity were good-natured, generous-hearted fellows, and they stood back and let the Liberty Boys do the dancing until all had danced a set, and then they danced a set.

This was kept up steadily, and all enjoyed themselves hugely.

Perhaps the most fun was had when Patsy and Carl were on the floor. The former could dance pretty well, but Carl was very awkward. He was about as broad as he was long, and his appearance was sufficient of itself to cause laughter.

"Shure an' yez can't dance innny more dhan a cow," said Patsy, in supreme contempt, as Carl stumbled in, swinging his partner, and nearly fell.

"Und you gannod tance any more as vat a muel gan tance," was Carl's retort, and this caused a roar of laughter.

Patsy colored up, and said, angrily:

"G'wan wid yez! Oi am a good dancer, an' it's mesilf'll bate dhe two oyes av yez into wan, whin we go out av dures!"

"I pet me my life you don'd vos do innnyting av dhe kind," was the reply.

"Jhust yez wait an' yez'll see," was the threat.

"All righd; I vill wait."

But when they went out of doors after the set was ended, they did not fight, as might have been expected; instead, they shook hands and declared that they had had a fine time.

Their quarrels invariably ended in this manner.

The dancing went on steadily for at least three hours, and then it stopped half an hour to let the girls rest; they had been dancing all the time, and were tired.

Of course, even though they were having a jolly time, Dick and his comrades did not neglect to take precautions against being surprised, in case a party of redcoats should happen to be in the vicinity; guards were stationed.

After they had rested awhile the dancing was resumed, and it was kept up until after midnight. Then Dick and the Liberty Boys bade the young folks good-night, after thanking them for an enjoyable evening, and went to their encampment and lay down and went to sleep.

They were up bright and early, and after they had breakfasted they mounted their horses and started out to look for bands of redcoats who might be out foraging.

The Liberty Boys divided into two parties, the better to get around lively, and to enable them to cover more territory.

Shortly after noon the party Dick commanded caught sight of a party of British troopers.

The British saw the Liberty Boys at almost the same moment, and as they were a smaller party than the patriot army, they started to run away.

"After them!" cried Dick; "we will kill or capture some of them, or know the reason why!"

The Liberty Boys gave utterance to cheers, and urged their horses forward at a gallop.

The redcoats were about half a mile away, but they heard the cheers plainly.

"Jove, we will have to get away from here at a lively rate, or those rebels will capture us!" said the leader of the party, a lieutenant.

"That's so," from one of the troopers; "likely those are the Liberty Boys, and they are dangerous fellows."

"You are right."

Dick kept urging the Liberty Boys to make their horses go faster.

The animals were already doing their best, however; and so the chase went on as it was for quite awhile.

The horses of pursued and pursuers seemed to be about equal in speed.

Presently it could be seen, however, that the horses of the Liberty Boys were gaining a little. The distance between the two parties had been lessened slightly.

"Onward, my brave boys!" cried Dick; "we are gaining on them, and will soon be able to overhaul them, I am sure."

"Yes, but it will be a long pull yet, Dick," said Bob.

"We don't mind that, if we are successful in the end."

"That's so."

Onward rode pursued and pursuers.

"It was beginning to grow exciting.

Closer and closer, slowly yet surely, drew the Liberty Boys to the British troopers.

The distance had been lessened to a quarter of a mile now, and the Liberty Boys began to feel sure of their game.

"We are going to get them!" said Dick.

"It looks that way," agreed Bob.

There was no more cheering or yelling now. The chase had settled down to a steady grind, which, if maintained an hour longer, must bring the Liberty Boys up to the fugitives.

The road led for the most part through the timber.

It wound this way and that, and twisted hither and thither like a huge serpent, and even though the British troopers were now less than a quarter of a mile distant, they were out of sight part of the time.

Suddenly, on rounding one of these bends in the road, the Liberty Boys were given a surprise.

The small party of troopers that they had been chasing

had been joined by another and larger one, so that now it numbered at least seventy men.

The Liberty Boys were brave, but they were not reckless, and so, at the word from Dick, they brought their horses to a stop as quickly as possible, and turned aside and entered the timber.

As they disappeared from sight the British came riding up the road at the top of their speed. They had the stronger force now, and were very brave.

They made a mistake, however.

They should not have been so bold when they were pitted against the Liberty Boys.

Without dismounting the youths fired a volley from their muskets and dropped five or six of the redcoats to the ground.

Enraged, the British returned the fire, but the youths were sheltered pretty thoroughly by the trees, and not one was killed, although two received wounds.

The wounds were not serious, and the two were enabled to retain their seats in the saddle.

"Dismount!" cried Dick, "and lead your horses back into the timber a ways."

The youths obeyed, and were soon far enough back in the timber so that they were in no danger from bullets of the enemy.

They quickly tied their horses to trees, and then moved back toward the road.

They approached cautiously, and when they got close to the road they were surprised to find that the British had disappeared.

"They have entered the timber on the other side of the road," said Dick; "they are going to try to fight us in our own fashion."

"That will suit us," said Bob.

"Yes; I think we can beat them at that game."

The youths took up positions behind trees, and then proceeded to reload their muskets.

It did not take long to do this, and then they were ready for the enemy.

They kept a sharp lookout, and presently Dick caught sight of one of the redcoats. He was looking out from behind a tree, and Dick quickly leveled his musket and fired.

A yell of pain went up, proving that the man had been hit by the bullets from Dick's weapon.

"I guess you got him, Dick," said Bob.

The Liberty Boys were all experts at this kind of fighting, and soon the crack, crack, crack of their muskets was heard.

The British returned the fire and succeeded in wounding two or three of the youths, but fortunately none of the wounds were of a serious nature.

It did not take the British very long to learn that they were playing a losing game, and so they drew back into the timber a ways to hold a council and decide what should be done.

Dick Slater understood what they were doing, and he

gave the order for the youths to run up the road a ways and cross over to the other side.

This was done, and then they hastened around till they could approach the spot where Dick expected to find the enemy, from the opposite direction to that in which they might be expected to come.

The Liberty Boys caught sight of the enemy.

The troopers were standing in scattered groups talking, and seemed to have no suspicion that the enemy was near.

Dick and his Liberty Boys moved silently and made a complete circle around the redcoats.

Then he called out, in a loud, ringing voice:

"Surrender! We have you surrounded, and if you make a move to resist or escape we will shoot you down without mercy."

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVANCE UPON CAMDEN.

Had a clap of thunder come from a clear sky, it would not have caused more surprise among the redcoats; and it would not have caused anywhere near the consternation that Dick's voice caused.

The leader of the troopers, a captain, looked in the direction from which Dick's voice sounded, and seemed undecided what to do.

The men looked also, and there was a frightened expression on the faces of the majority.

It was evident that they did not like the situation.

"What shall we do?" Dick heard the captain ask of the lieutenant, there being the two officers.

"That is for you to say," was the reply.

"I dislike to surrender to a smaller force."

"Yes, I dislike the idea myself, but they have us at such a terrible disadvantage that it seems as though it would be folly for us to try to resist."

"I judge that you are right, and it will be best for us to surrender."

Then he lifted up his voice and called out:

"We surrender! Don't shoot!"

"That is a sensible decision," replied Dick. "Order your men to throw down their arms."

The captain did so, and the troopers dropped their muskets.

"Now tell your men to unbuckle their belts and drop them and the small arms to the ground."

The captain gave this order, also, and it was obeyed at once.

Then the Liberty Boys advanced and closed in on the redcoats and made them prisoners by binding their arms with their own belts.

"This is a sad day for me," said the captain of the British troopers; "I would never have believed that I would surrender to an inferior force."

"There is not much difference in the sizes of the forces," said Dick; "and then we had all the advantage of position."

"True; well, it can't be helped now, and there is no need of lamenting."

"You are right."

The prisoners were conducted back to the road, and then their horses were brought and the troopers were assisted to mount.

Some of the Liberty Boys guarded the prisoners, while others brought the horses out of the timber, and then the youths mounted and rode back in the direction of the Hudson home, the prisoners riding in their midst.

"Well, we have done pretty well, Dick," said Bob Estabrook, he and Dick being in the lead.

"Yes; we have done better than I expected, Bob."

"That's right; I didn't think we would be able to bag the entire party."

"Neither did I."

It was nearly evening when they got to the vicinity of the Hudson home, and they went into camp at once.

They remained there that night, and the next morning Dick mounted his horse and rode on to see where the patriot army was.

He found it about two miles away, coming along as rapidly as was possible, and he rode along by the side of General Gates and talked to him quite awhile.

He told about having captured the seventy British troopers the day before, and the general said that this was a very good piece of work.

When they reached the point where the Liberty Boys were encamped the prisoners were turned over to General Gates, and were forced to march in the midst of the patriot army, while tired and sick patriot soldiers rode the horses belonging to the troopers.

This arrangement did not suit the prisoners very well, but they could not help themselves.

It was very hard on the troopers to walk, for their horses were not used to it.

The Liberty Boys, being free to do so now that the prisoners were off their hands, rode forward at a gallop. They wished to look out for more foraging parties of redcoats.

They were not successful, however.

Although they put in the whole day and covered a great deal of territory they did not come upon any parties of redcoats.

The patriot army made very fair progress that day, and went into camp in the evening at the home of the Hardys, which was distant only ten miles from Camden.

The patriots did not believe that the British had any knowledge of their coming, but in thinking thus they were mistaken.

General Cornwallis had received hints to the effect that an army was advancing from the northeastward, and he had scouts and spies out constantly, and these scouts had seen the patriot army, and two hours after it went into camp the news had been carried to General Cornwallis.

He at once called a council.

As soon as the officers of the staff had come to headquarters the general told them the news.

"The enemy is within ten miles of here," he said; "and now the question is, what shall we do about the matter? Shall we remain here and await an attack, or shall we go out and make an attempt at surprising them?"

"I am in favor of going out and taking them by surprise," said one of the officers.

"And so am I," from another.

The others all said the same.

"I think myself that it will be best," said General Cornwallis; "it will give us a big advantage, and I think it will enable us to give the enemy a good thrashing."

This was the opinion of all, and so it was decided that they would get ready and march away toward the north about ten o'clock.

The officers dispersed to give the orders to the respective regiments, and General Cornwallis was left alone.

"I hope that we may be able to scatter the rebels to the four winds," he said to himself; "and I am of the opinion that we will be able to do so."

Meanwhile in the patriot encampment a council was in progress.

The patriot officers were discussing the advisability of making a night march and taking the British by surprise.

It was at last decided that they would do so.

"We will start about ten o'clock," said General Gates.

The word was sent around through the army, and the soldiers began making ready for the night march.

They didn't like the idea any too well.

They had been marching so long that they were almost worn out, and now to put a ten mile march on them, after they had marched all day, with only three or four hours rest between, was a bit discouraging.

Still, there was one consolation; the marching would end with this one march—at least it would be the last one for awhile, so they thought.

The Liberty Boys were well pleased to think that there was to be a battle soon. This was what they were wishing for.

Immediately after supper Dick mounted his horse and rode away toward the Hudson home.

He did not stop there, however, but rode onward until he came to the home of Tom Morgan.

It was now just coming dark, but Dick saw Tom in the barnyard milking the cows, and he called to him.

Tom hastened to the fence.

It was not so dark but what he was able to recognize Dick.

"Ah, it is you, Dick!" he exclaimed; "I am glad to see you."

"I have come to tell you that if you want to take part in the battle you will have to get ready and come right along with me, Tom," said Dick.

"When is the battle to be fought, Dick?" eagerly.

"To-night."

"Soon as that?"

"Yes."

"I am glad of that."

"So am I. We are going to start on the march to Camden at ten o'clock."

"Well, I will be ready to go along with you in a few minutes, Dick; just wait till I take this milk to the house. Then I will saddle my horse and go with you."

"Very well."

Dick waited, and when Tom was ready they rode away.

"The folks didn't want me to take part in the battle," said Tom.

"Didn't they?" asked Dick.

"No; they said for me to let the soldiers do the fighting; but I told them that I wanted to have a hand in the war, and so they finally gave in and consented to let me come."

"I hope you won't regret it, Tom."

"I don't think there is any danger that I will do so."

Then he said that two or three of the other boys who were members of the Home Guard wanted to go along.

"They live along this road," Tom said, "and we won't have to go out of our way to get them."

Stops were made at the homes of the three, and then, when the last one had been picked up the youths set out for the patriot encampment at a gallop.

They arrived there an hour before the time to start on the march.

"It is better to be an hour too early than an hour too late," said Dick, and his four companions agreed with him.

The Liberty Boys were ready.

In fact, all the soldiers were ready, and about a quarter to ten o'clock the march was begun.

It was slow work, for the night was tolerably dark, and the road, which led through the timber most all the way, was rough, and was hemmed in on all sides by hills and then by swamps, alternating.

Dick and the Liberty Boys had expected that they would be permitted to take the lead, as they were on horseback, but General Gates refused, and sent some light infantry under Captain Porterfield ahead.

Dick was disappointed, and Bob and some of the youths were angry.

"I don't see why he wouldn't let us go ahead," said Bob; "we are on horseback, and could get around so much more lively than can be the case with infantry."

"That is true," agreed Dick; "but General Gates is commanding, and we must obey orders."

"I know that; but it is hard."

So they rode along, not far from the rear, and talked in anything but a lively strain.

The march was kept up until three o'clock, and then, from away in front came the roar and rattle of musketry.

"Captain Porterfield's light infantry has encountered the enemy!" cried General Gates; "forward, men, to the attack!"

CHAPTER X.

THE DISASTER AT CAMDEN.

General Gates was right.

The advance guard of light infantry of the British army had met Captain Porterfield's force of light infantry, and a lively skirmish was begun at once.

All the patriot soldiers were excited, but perhaps none were more excited than the Liberty Boys.

They were away back toward the rear and could not get past the main army quickly, and this caused them a great deal of worriment and disappointment.

"Oh, there's fighting going on and we are not in it!" groaned Bob.

"Shure an' thot's a shame, so it is!" from Patsy Brannigan, who, like Bob, was a fighter.

"Yah, dot vos peen ein shamen," said Carl Gookenspieler.

"Oh, you couldn't fight if you were there," said Bob.

"Yah, I gould vite lige eferytings," was the reply.

"Yis, yez are afther bein' a ghreat foighter—wid yer mouth," said Patsy.

"Yah, und dot is der vay you haf didded most uf your fighding, Batsy Prannigan," retorted Carl.

"Let's try to get to the front," said Bob.

"We can't do it, Bob," said Dick; "in the darkness, and where the road is so narrow and crooked, it will be impossible for us to get past the foot soldiers without trampling on them, and that would not do."

"Then let's dismount and tie our horses," said Bob; "and then we can hurry forward and take part in the skirmish."

"That's a good suggestion," agreed Dick.

So he gave the order and the Liberty Boys dismounted and tied their horses to the trees along the roadside.

"Now come along, boys," said Dick; "but you will have to keep out at the side of the road."

They moved along as rapidly as was possible under the circumstances. This was not very rapidly, however.

The crack, crack, crack of the musketry could be heard toward the front, and the youths hoped that they would be able to get there in time to take a hand in the skirmish.

They finally arrived on the scene, and found that the encounter had taken place near a small stream of water known as Sanders' creek. The Liberty Boys, eager to fight, dashed to the front and confronted the British, who advanced rapidly.

"Stand firm, Liberty Boys!" cried Dick, waving his sword in one hand and firing a pistol with the other; "show the British what brave patriot soldiers can do!"

The Liberty Boys fired a volley at the approaching British soldiers.

The other patriot soldiers retreated, however, and the youths were ordered to do the same, so the Liberty Boys were forced to go back, much against their will.

Both armies had failed in their scheme of surprising each other, and so it was decided that hostilities should be suspended until morning.

Under flags of truce the soldiers from both armies advanced and carried away their dead and wounded.

Several patriot soldiers had been killed, among them being Captain Porterfield, and several more were wounded.

The British had lost about the same number, dead and wounded.

While the patriot soldiers were looking after their wounded and burying the dead General Gates and his officers were holding a council.

"What shall we do?" asked General Gates.

"Well," said General Stevens, "it seems to me that the only thing we can do now is to fight."

"I think it would be a good plan to retire a few miles and take up as strong a position as possible," said Baron de Kalb. "This does not seem to be a very good place for a battle to be held."

The others overruled the baron, however. The majority were for staying where they were and fighting it out.

"Whatever the majority say is what I say," said the baron.

So it was decided to lay on their arms the rest of the night and then begin the battle early in the morning.

The Liberty Boys knew it would not be possible to do much if they tried to fight on horseback; so they led their horses far up a hill to its top, half a mile away, and tied them there.

"If we get the worst of the battle to-day," said Dick, "we will know where to find our horses, and can come here and get them and get away."

"Yes, but we mustn't think of getting the worst of it," said Bob.

"I hope that we may not get the worst of it, Bob; but it is well, always, to look at both sides of the question."

"Yes, that's so."

The youths came back down to the road and lay down on their blankets and got some sleep, but it did not seem to them as though they had much more than closed their eyes before they were aroused and told to get ready to go into battle.

They were up quickly, and had rolled up their blankets. Then they ate their frugal breakfasts and were ready for the fray.

They asked Dick if he thought General Gates would let them to go into the battle as an independent force, to array itself as it saw fit, and to work wherever it pleased.

Dick said that he did not know, but would ask General Gates if the youths wished. They said they did wish it, and so he went to the general and asked him if he might act independently with his Liberty Boys.

"Yes," was the curt reply; "for all the good you will be able to do, you might as well act independently as any other way."

Dick flushed, but simply said, quietly:

"Thank you, sir."

Then he went back and told the youths that it was all right, and they were well pleased.

Fifteen minutes later the battle begun.

The rattle and roar of musketry was soon heard on all sides, and the deeper booming of the cannon added to the noise and confusion.

The attack was made by Virginia and North Carolina militia, and they attacked trained and disciplined veteran British soldiers—or rather, tried to. They did not even know how to advance properly, and became tangled up as a consequence. Seeing his opportunity, the British officer, Colonel Webster, ordered a charge, and the British came down upon the patriot militia like an avalanche.

The shock was irresistible. The Virginia militia threw down their muskets and fled without firing a shot, and the North Carolina militia did the same a few minutes later. Soon the patriot left flank was a mob of men running for life as best they could, and after them came Tarleton, the "butcher," who cut them down like sheep.

Colonel Webster then left Tarleton to look after the militia, and attacked the first Maryland brigade and slowly forced it off the field.

The second Maryland brigade, however, was more successful, and twice repelled the assault of Rawdon's troops, and then made a spirited bayonet charge and broke through the British lines, and remained victorious on that part of the field till the rest of the battle was fought to a finish.

All this time the Liberty Boys were busy.

They were with the second Maryland brigade, and did grand work in helping this portion of the patriot army to win a victory; and as soon as this had been accomplished they went to the assistance of the first brigade, and did splendid work there also.

At last they saw it was useless to try to fight longer, and they retreated to where the second Maryland brigade had made its stand, and the commander of this force now ordered a retreat to be begun.

Although under fire from Webster's men the soldiers retreated in good order and made their escape along a narrow road which ran toward the west, between the swamp and the hillside.

The Liberty Boys accompanied these soldiers a mile, and then stopped and made their way to the top of the hill where their horses were tied.

Here they paused to rest and take account of the damage that had been done them by the redcoats.

They found that they had lost seven Liberty Boys, which was not so bad when it is taken into consideration that they had been nearly everywhere on the field of battle and had exposed themselves in almost a reckless manner.

Dick and Bob, eager to get a view of the scene, climbed trees and gazed around them with interest.

To the northward and eastward could be seen hundreds of soldiers, both British and patriot, and the patriots were simply running for their lives, while the redcoats were cutting them down whenever one was overtaken.

"This has been a disastrous affair, Dick," said Bob.

"Yes, it is a terrible disaster, Bob. The patriot army is scattered to the four winds, so to speak."

"You are right; I wonder what has become of General Gates?"

"Hard to say, Bob; perhaps he is dead."

"I saw Baron de Kalb go down, Dick," said Bob, in a sad voice.

"So did I; he was unhorsed and fighting to the last."

"Yes, he was a brave officer."

The youths were mistaken about General Gates being dead, however.

He was not dead.

He was a fugitive, fleeing for his life.

As Napoleon was carried away by the rush of the retreating troops at Waterloo, so was General Gates carried away in the rush of his panic-stricken troops that day at Camden.

He did not succeed in extricating himself from among the fugitives until after a distance of ten miles had been traversed, and then, realizing that the disaster was irreparable, and that he could not hope to get his army together again, he secured a fresh horse and rode eastward as rapidly as possible.

He did not stop, save to eat and snatch a few hours of sleep, until he had reached Hillsborough, two hundred miles from the scene of the disastrous battle.

This is given in history as being one of the most disastrous defeats sustained by an army on the battlefield. The patriot killed and wounded must have been at least one thousand, and at least that number of prisoners were taken. Seven pieces of artillery and two thousand muskets were captured. The British loss was only a little more than three hundred, and the majority of those were killed by the second Maryland brigade, assisted by the Liberty Boys.

This practically ended the military career of General Gates.

He was censured severely for the manner in which he had conducted the affair, from first to last, and he was ridiculed for his flight to Hillsborough. But as that point was not the place from which the state organization was controlled, it was the proper place to go for the purpose of trying to organize a new army.

The majority of people, however, thought that he should have remained in the vicinity of Camden and gathered his army together as best he could, and then retreated to Hillsborough.

When he arrived at Hillsborough and reported the disaster at Camden the patriot officers of the state were aghast.

They did not know what to do.

"Can we not get another army together?" asked General Gates.

The officials shook their heads.

They said that it was very doubtful.

"Well," said General Gates, doggedly, "I did the best

I could, but the British far outnumbered my force and we could not stand against them."

The officials knew nothing contrary to this, and so did not say anything. The truth was, however, that the disastrous result of the affair was due to General Gates' own mismanagement and lack of generalship—at least, so history says.

CHAPTER XI.

DICK STARTS FOR CAMDEN.

"What shall we do, Dick?"

"I hardly know, Bob."

"Shall we beat a retreat, the same as the rest of the army is doing?"

"I hate to go away until after I learn what fate has overtaken General Gates."

"Then you think of staying in the vicinity of Camden awhile?"

"Yes; but it will be dangerous."

"So it will."

The triumph of the British will make them more arrogant and overbearing than ever, and they will heap indignities upon the heads of the patriot settlers."

"Yes; so they will."

"While waiting to learn the fate that has overtaken General Gates we can watch the redcoats, and may be able to do a great deal of good in keeping them from doing as they please with the patriot settlers."

"Yes, for a little while. They will soon learn that we are in the vicinity, and will send out strong forces to capture us or drive us out of the country."

"No doubt about that; but we can stay until forced to go."

"I'm in for it; so far as I am concerned, I would like a chance to strike the redcoats a few blows, to pay them for the day's work."

"So would I."

Dick and Bob were in a treetop watching the flight of the patriot soldiers.

"Do you really think that General Gates has been captured?" asked Bob, after a brief silence.

"I don't know, Bob; but we will remain in this part of the country until we can find out, if we can do so."

The two remained in the treetop an hour, watching the fleeing patriots and the pursuing redcoats, and then they climbed down and rejoined their comrades.

"What did you see?" asked Mark Morrison.

Dick shook his head sadly.

"Nothing pleasant," he replied. "Our comrades are in full flight, and the redcoats are after them. It is bad business."

"Yes; a great disaster has certainly overtaken the patriot army."

The Liberty Boys were indeed sad.

They had hoped that the patriot army would thrash the British army, and instead of this the patriots had been ignominiously defeated and routed completely, scattered to the four winds.

The question as to where they should go came up.

After considerable discussion it was decided that they should go back to the vicinity of the Hardy home and go into camp.

Tom Morgan said he knew of a splendid place for a secret encampment not far from Mr. Hardy's home, and so it was decided to start at once.

They untied their horses and led them down the hill, going toward the west.

Half an hour later they came to a narrow, winding lane leading through the timber.

Here they mounted their horses and rode away at a leisurely gait.

They did not ride fast, for they did not know but they might meet some of the redcoats at any moment, and they did not wish to be right on top of the enemy if such a thing did happen.

They were an hour and a half in reaching the Hardy home, and here they were given a welcome that pleased them.

Mr. Hardy was sorry to hear the news of the disaster at Camden.

"That is bad," he said, shaking his head.

"Yes, indeed," from Dick.

"Whut air' ye goin' ter do?"

"We are going to go into camp near here and stay until we learn what has become of General Gates."

"D'ye think he hez be'en captured?"

"Yes, or that he has been killed."

"Waal, I don' see ez ye c'u'd do ennythin' even if ye knowed he wuz er prisoner."

"We could at least try to rescue him," was the reply.

"Yas, ye c'u'd try."

The tone of the man's voice proved that he had his doubts regarding the youth's ability to rescue the general if he was a prisoner.

"They are going to make their camp on the hill up yonder, Mr. Hardy," said Tom Morgan, pointing to a hill nearly half a mile away.

"Waal, thet'll be er good place; et'd take night a-most a army ter git him erway frum thar."

"Yes, so it would."

"We are going to stay here as long as possible," exclaimed Dick. "The British, now that they have beaten our army and sent it away routed, will overrun this part of the country, and no home of patriots will be safe. We wish to do what we can to keep them from robbing and pillaging at pleasure."

Mr. Hardy shook his head.

"I'm afeerd ye kain't do much," he said; "thar's less'n er hundred uv ye, an' thar's a big army uv redcoats."

"True," agreed Dick; "but when we catch a small party of a redcoats off to itself we can make it hot for them."

"Likely ye may be able ter do thet onct er twicet, an' then, arter thet, ye won't ketch ther redcoats travelin' in small parties."

"That is possible. Well, we will do the best we can."

Then the Liberty Boys made their way to the top of the hill in question.

They looked around them and saw that it would be a splendid place for an encampment.

The top of the hill was almost level, and consisted of perhaps three acres of ground, all timbered.

Form this top the descent was rather steep, thus making it a difficult matter for an enemy to make an attack.

"We could make a strong fight here, Dick," said Bob.

"So we could; but I prefer that the redcoats do not learn where we are."

The youths now busied themselves going into camp.

They thought it possible that they might be here sometime, and so they made things as snug and comfortable as possible.

It was now past noon, and they ate what food they had, and felt better.

They rested a couple of hours, and then several small parties went out to secure provisions.

They went to the homes of patriots and secured all the provisions they could carry.

Those who remained in the encampment kept watch to see if any parties of redcoats appeared in the vicinity, but none did.

When the pursuit of the patriot soldiers was abandoned the British doubtless returned to Camden.

This was Dick's idea, at least.

Along toward evening he and Bob held a council.

"I am going to enter Camden to-night, Bob, if such a thing is possible," said Dick.

"That will be dangerous, old fellow," in a solicitous voice.

"True; we must learn the fate of General Gates. It is our duty to do so."

"I suppose that you are right."

They talked awhile longer, and then Bob asked Dick how he was going to manage the matter of entering the British encampment at Camden.

"I am going to don a British uniform, Bob, and enter in that guise."

"Ah, that is a good idea."

About five o'clock Dick secured a British uniform from a dead soldier, and by six o'clock was ready to start.

He told Bob to take command of the Liberty Boys during his absence, and the youth said that he would do so.

A few minutes later the young captain of the Liberty Boys mounted his horse and rode away in the direction of Camden.

He rode at a gallop until he was perhaps half way to Camden, and then he slackened the speed to a walk, as he was in no hurry to reach the British encampment.

Suddenly there was the sharp crack of a rifle, and the bullet knocked Dick's hat off.

Someone had fired at him from behind a tree at the roadside.

Dick leaped off his horse instantly, and ran in the direction from which the shot had come.

He saw someone running through the timber, and he went in pursuit.

To his surprise he found that the person was a boy of about twelve years.

He seized hold of the boy and brought him to a stop.

"Hello! Who are you?" asked Dick.

The boy faced Dick and looked at him defiantly.

"I'm Tom Ford," was the reply.

"Why did you shoot at me?"

"Because I hate the redcoats," was the prompt reply.

"Ah, you do, eh?"

"Yes."

"Why do you hate them?"

"Because some of them came to our house the other day an' took everythin' we had, an' when father objected they knocked him down an' kicked and beat him, an' he is in bed sick yet."

"And so you shouldered his rifle and came out to get revenge on any redcoat who happened along, eh?" with a smile.

"Yes."

"I don't blame you," said Dick; "but this time, if you had aimed a little better, you would have done a bad thing."

"Why so?" wonderingly.

"Because I am not a redcoat."

"You ain't?"

The boy stared in amazement, and with a look of consternation on his face as well.

"No."

"But ye've got on a British uniform."

"True; I donned a British uniform for a purpose."

"Is that so? Well, I'm mighty glad that I missed you, then!"

"So am I," with a smile.

Then Dick asked the boy where he lived.

"About a mile from here," was the reply.

"In what direction?"

"South."

Dick made up his mind that it might be a good plan to go home with the boy, and leave his horse there. The animal was a valuable one, and the Liberty Boy did not like the idea of leaving it tied out in the timber.

"I might be detained in Camden," he thought; "or might even be captured, and then my horse would suffer."

So he suggested to the boy that they go to his home together, and the boy was delighted.

"I will be glad to have you come, now that I know you are not a redcoat," he said.

While they were retracing their steps to the road Dick

told Tom Ford who he was, and the boy was more pleased than ever.

"I have heard about you," he said. "The redcoats that robbed our home and used father so roughly said that they had encountered your Liberty Boys."

"Quite likely they told the truth, for we have had brushes with a number of parties of redcoats during the past week or so."

They reached the road and found Dick's horse standing where he had stopped when the youth leaped off him to go in pursuit of the person who had fired the shot.

Dick climbed into the saddle and rode along, the boy walking by his side.

Ten minutes later they arrived at the Ford home.

The house did not stand right by the road, but was back from it a hundred yards or so.

They led the horse to the stable and into it, and unbridled and unsaddled him, and gave him some feed.

"You will take care of my horse until I come back, Tom?" asked Dick.

"Yes; you may depend upon me to do that."

"Good!"

They went to the house, then, and Tom introduced Dick to his father and mother, and to his sister Jessie, a pretty girl of about seventeen years.

Mr. Ford was suffering as a result of the rough treatment that had been given him by the redcoats, but he did not complain.

"I am glad that I am alive," he said, philosophically.

Dick remained there until it was dark, and then he bade the patriots good-by and took his departure.

He walked rapidly in the direction of Camden.

It was not so dark but what one could see distinctly, and suddenly a man stepped out from the edge of the timber bordering the road, and said:

"Hello, comrade! Where have you been?"

HOWARD J. RICHARDS
NEW CITY, N.Y.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK FINDS A COMPANION.

Dick saw that the newcomer had on a red uniform, it being possible to distinguish color, and so he knew at once that the fellow was a redcoat.

"Up in the country a ways," replied Dick, promptly. "Where have you been?"

"Oh, I've been doing a little foraging on my own hook," was the reply; "I was with a party of soldiers day before yesterday, and we robbed a house, and I suspected, from the actions of the man, that he had money hidden somewhere. I went there, leveled a pistol at his head, and ordered him to tell where the money was."

"Did he tell you?" with assumed eagerness.

"No."

"You couldn't make him do so, eh?"

"No; he was stubborn, and declared that he had no money."

"What did you do, then?"

"I tied him up and searched for the money, but did not find it."

"That was too bad," said Dick, in a well simulated tone of sympathy.

"Yes, I had my trouble for my pains."

The soldier had fallen in alongside Dick at once, and they continued walking onward while talking.

Dick was turning the affair over in his mind.

He wondered whether this would be a good thing for him, or whether it would not.

It might make his entrance into the British encampment easier and safer, he decided, finally, and so he made up his mind to make no attempt to part company with his companion.

They had gone perhaps three-quarters of a mile when suddenly eight or nine men leaped out from the roadside and seized them.

The two struggled with all their might.

They did not know who their assailants might be, of course, but the instinct of self-defense was sufficient to make them put up as strong a fight as possible.

They were too greatly outnumbered, however, and were speedily overcome.

"Bring 'em erlong," said one of the men, when the two had succumbed and their arms had been bound. "We'll show 'em how ter come ter peeple's houses an' draw pistols an' carry things with er high han'!"

The two were half led, half dragged through the timber, and half an hour later the party arrived at a house standing in a clearing.

"Why, this is the place where I was a little while ago!" exclaimed the redcoat.

"Yas, this is ther place," said the leader of the party; "an' we are goin' ter make ye wush't ye hedn't b'en heer!"

The two were taken into the house, and then Dick learned that his companion had not told him all that had happened at the place. The fellow had become so angry at the refusal of the patriot settler to tell where the money was hidden that he had pounded him over the head with the butt of a pistol until the victim had fallen to the floor senseless. Then he had taken his departure.

It happened that a party of neighbors had been out searching for the child of one of their number that had strayed away and got lost, and they had come to the house and found the woman trying to bring her husband to.

They had left one of their number to help the woman and had then hastened away to get ahead of the redcoat.

As has been seen, they succeeded.

They had expected to find only one redcoat, but had found two, and this gave them all the more satisfaction.

The settler who had been beaten over the head with the

pistol butt lay on the bed, his head bandaged up. He was conscious, but was suffering a good deal of pain.

The men who had captured Dick and the redcoat now asked the woman which one of the two it was that had injured her husband.

She pointed to Dick's companion.

"So you are ther one, hey?" said the leader of the party of men, grimly.

"Yes, I'm the one; but if the fool had told me where his money was hidden he need not have got thumped over the head."

"Oh, I s'pose not," sarcastically; "I reckon ye think thet he had orter giv' ye all his munny without enny words about it, hey?"

"Yes," was the sullen reply.

"Waal, we think et er leetle bit diff runt, hey, boys?" to his comrades.

"Ye bet we do!" in chorus.

Then the spokesman asked the woman if she had ever seen Dick before. Of course the settlers did not suspect that the Liberty Boys was not a readcoat.

"No; I hain't never seen him afore," replied the woman.

"Wasn't he yer pardner in this heer bizness?" the spokesman asked, addressing the redcoat.

The fellow shook his head.

"No," he said; "he wasn't with me, and he had nothing to do with the affair at all. I happened to come up with him on the road, and we were walking along together, that is all."

"Wall, thet's luck fur him."

Then the speaker turned to one of his companions, and said:

"Go out in ther timber an' cut erbout a dozen good stout switches."

The redcoat paled.

"What are you going to do?" he asked, a slight quaver in his voice.

"We're goin' ter give ye er taste of switch-oil, ye skoundrel," was the reply.

"See here," blustered the redcoat, putting on as bold a front as possible; "if you fellows dare to do that it will be as much as your lives are worth."

"W'y so?"

"Because I am a British soldier, and my commander will send a force out here, and you will every one be seized and hanged!"

The settler did not seem to be greatly alarmed.

"He'll do thet, anyhow, I reckon, if he feels like et," was the reply; "so we wull have ther satersackshun uv givin' ye er good lickin'."

Presently the man who had gone to cut the switches came to the door, switches in hand.

"Heer ye air," he said. "Bring ther victum out, an we'll gi' 'im er good thrashin'—wun thet'll remind 'im uv ther wuns his daddy used ter giv' 'im when he wuz er boy."

The redcoats was led out of the house, protesting and

threatening, and was conducted to a tree about seventy-five yards from the house.

They tied him to the tree, with his face toward it, after removing his coat. They had brought Dick along.

"I don' know as we wull lick ye," said the leader of the party; "but et may do ye some good ter see us lambast yer comrade; ef so be's ye hev enny thoughts uv doin' enny harm ter patriots, ye may think et over an' change yer min'."

"I have no intention of harming any patriots," said Dick.

"Thet may be; et'll be er good thing fur ye, ef ye don' do ennythin' uv ther kin'."

Then the spokesman turned to one of the men and said:

"Take er good switch an' begin work."

The man took up a switch and began laying it on the back of the redcoat vigorously.

The fellow stood the punishment bravely for awhile. He was pretty gritty, and did not cry out.

Presently groans were wrung from him, however.

"I thort we'd bring sum sounds outer ye purty soon!" said the spokesman, grimly. "How d'ye like et, enny-how?"

"I'll have the life of every one of you to pay for this," half groaned the victim.

"We'll hev ter resk et," was the reply. "Lay on ther switch, Jack."

The man did so, and the redcoat groaned and twisted in his efforts to evade the switch.

The men gave the victim a good thrashing, but as the switches were not heavy ones the damage was not severe; it was painful, but not of a character to be lasting.

At last the leader said the man had been whipped enough, and so the flogging ceased.

"Now whut d'ye say ter givin' this heer other redcoat a few licks?" said one of the men.

They talked the matter over, and finally decided not to do so.

"I guess he hez seen enuff so thet he will be keerful whut he does ter patriot in future," said the spokesman.

So they led the two back into the house.

The redcoat was groaning and threatening, but ceased when told to do so by the leader of the party of settlers.

He feared he might be taken out and given another dose of the switch.

While the men were discussing the matter of what should be done with the prisoners Tom Ford put in an appearance. He had come over to borrow some cornmeal, and when he saw Dick his eyes opened wide.

Dick gave him a meaning look and a shake of the head, however, and he did not let on that he had ever seen Dick before.

When the cornmeal had been given Tom he started to go, but motioned to the leader of the party of settlers, and the man followed him out of doors.

"Whut d'ye want, Tom?" was asked.

"I wanted to tell you that that other fellow in there is a patriot," said the boy.

"How d'ye know?" the man asked.

The boy told him.

"Waal, waal! And so he is Dick Slater, eh? I'm mighty glad thet ye told me, Tom. We'll manage ter turn him loose without ther other feller knowin' uv et, so he kin go on down ter Camden ter do his spy work."

CHAPTER XIII.

GETTING AFTER THE REDCOATS.

This man called the others out into the kitchen, two or three at a time, and told them what Tom had said about Dick being a patriot, and after some consideration it was decided to let the real redcoat go at the same time that Dick was permitted to do so.

The leader of the party of men said to the redcoat:

"Ef ye'll prommus ter not come back heer an' bother us enny more we'll let ye go."

"And what if I don't promise?" sullenly.

"Then we'll keep ye er pris'ner, an' give ye er lickin' ev'ry day till ye do prommus."

"All right, then. I promise."

"Thet's senserble; I s'pose ye air goin' ter keep yer prommus?"

"Of course."

"Becos, if ye air thinkin' uv not doin' so ye hed better change yer min'. Ye see et's this way: Ef ye sh'd come back heer with ther intenshun uv doin' us some damage, an' we sh'd git holt uv ye—ez we mought do, ye know—we'd hang yer ter er tree without enny sairimony ertall."

"Oh, I won't bother you any more."

With this the prisoners' arms were unbound, and they were told that they could go.

They lost no time in doing so.

The redcoat was eager to get away, and Dick did not care to remain for fear something might be said that would inform his companion of the fact that he (Dick) was not a redcoat.

So they set out through the timber in the direction of the road.

Dick's companion muttered threats as they went.

"I'll have revenge on those scoundrels if it is the last thing I do in the world," he said.

"Well, I don't know that I would want to bother those men any more," said Dick.

"Why not?"

"Because they are dangerous."

"That may be; but if you had been tied up to a tree and whipped like a negro slave you would want revenge, the same as I do."

"Perhaps," was the reply; "but you must remember that you are taking the risk of losing your life. That man

meant it when he said that if he got hold of you again he would hang you."

"I don't doubt that; but I won't let him get hold of me."

They reached the road presently, and then they walked faster.

An hour later they arrived at Camden, and Dick had no difficulty in entering, owing to the fact that he was with the redcoat.

He parted with the redcoat as soon as they were in the town, and went to an old shed and lay down and went to sleep.

He was up before daylight, and when the camp began to stir he was on the street.

He began making inquiries, cautiously, at once, and it did not take him long to learn that General Gates had not been captured. Neither had his body been found on the battlefield.

"Then he must have escaped," thought Dick; "well, as that is what I came here to find out I may as well get away at once."

Presently he saw a force of redcoats getting ready to start somewhere, and he asked one where they were going.

"Four or five miles up in the country," was the reply; "some scoundrelly rebels tied one of our comrades up to a tree last night and whipped him, and we are going up there to settle with them."

"Ah, yes," said Dick; "that is right."

At the same time he said to himself that he must get to the Ford home, mount his horse and get to the Liberty Boys' encampment and bring back the Liberty Boys to the vicinity of the threatened settlers' homes before the redcoats could get there.

This would require rapid work, but Dick felt that he was equal to it.

He coolly and quietly walked out of the encampment, passing the sentinel with a nod and a pleasant "good-morning," and then walked slowly onward until he was out of sight around a bend in the road.

Then he darted away on the run.

He had no time to lose.

He ran on and on.

He was so accustomed to exertion and outdoor work and life that he was able to keep on running steadily.

He went to the Ford home and told Tom that a force of British were coming, and sent Tom to warn the patriots, while he rode on to the Liberty Boys' camp. He told them to get ready, which they did, and set out for the Ford home.

They were not long in reaching the Ford home, and as it was only about three-quarters of a mile to the home of the man who had been beaten into insensibility by the redcoat the night before Dick decided that it would be best to leave their horses near the Ford home and proceed on foot.

This was done, and when they got there no redcoats were found.

"They haven't got here yet," said Dick; "I thought that in all probability we would get here ahead of them. This is good, for it enables us to get in shape to receive them."

"That's so," agreed Bob.

"Do you think they will come here first?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I think it likely."

Dick stationed the youths in the best possible manner and then went away on a scouting expedition.

"I will try to get a sight of the enemy," he said; "if the redcoats are coming this way it will be all right, but if they should be headed toward the home of some other patriot then I will hasten back and let you know."

"Well, don't wander too far away, old fellow," said Bob; "and don't let the redcoats gobble you up."

"Never you fear for me, Bob."

Dick hastened away.

He went in the direction of Camden, and was sure that he would meet the enemy before he had gone far.

He was mistaken, however; he went nearly a mile and had not seen any signs of the force of British.

He began to think that it had gone to some other patriot home, instead of the one where the Liberty Boys were, and so he hastened back.

Just as he got there Tom Ford came running up, and said that the British force was at the home of a settler half a mile away.

"Guide us to the place, Tom!" cried Dick.

The boy hastened away, and the Liberty Boys followed.

It did not take them long to reach the patriot's home, and they found that they were just in time. The British soldiers had tied the settler to a tree and were just getting ready to give him a whipping with switches.

The enemy's force was fully as strong as that of the Liberty Boys, and so Dick did not dare try to force it to surrender. There was only one thing to do, and that was to open fire and disperse the British in this manner.

It seems like a pretty hard thing to do, to fire into a party of men in this manner, but it was war time, and in war all is fair. To take the enemy by surprise is a stroke of strategy and is considered the height of generalship; so the Liberty Boys did not hesitate.

They leveled their muskets at the word from Dick and fired a volley right into the midst of the British.

The volley was fired deliberately, after the youths had taken careful aim, and at least fifty of the redcoats went down, dead and wounded.

The Liberty Boys were all dead shots, and it is doubtful if a single bullet was wasted. The damage would have been much greater had the youths all been able to choose different targets. This they were unable to do, however, and many of the redcoats went down with two or three bullets in their bodies.

The volley had come so unexpectedly that the redcoats were for a moment paralyzed with horror. They stood still and stared in the direction from which the shots had come.

This was Dick's opportunity, and he ordered the Liberty Boys to charge.

They obeyed instantly.

They charged straight toward the redcoats, giving vent as they did so to their battlecry:

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!"

This was sufficient to arouse the redcoats, and they turned and fled at the top of their speed.

"Fire, Liberty Boys!" cried Dick.

The youths drew their pistols and fired a volley after the fleeing redcoats and dropped several.

"Keep on going!" ordered Dick. "Don't stop!"

The youths answered with cheers, and dashed away in pursuit of the redcoats.

The British soldiers scattered, however, and so the chase was presently abandoned.

The Liberty Boys then made their way back to the house and freed the patriot from his bonds.

He thanked them earnestly, for he realized that they had saved him from having to undergo a terrible ordeal. The redcoats would have whipped him to insensibility, without a doubt.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK.

"Well, Dick, we whipped 'em!"

"So we did, Bob!"

"Yes; we not only whipped them, but we killed and wounded nearly half their number."

"I judge that is true."

The Liberty Boys went and took a look at the British soldiers who were lying all around.

It was found that thirty had been killed, and twenty-two were wounded.

"We will bury the dead as soon as we have looked after the wounded," said Dick.

The latter were carried into the settler's house and placed on blankets spread on the floor.

Then the Liberty Boys dressed their wounds as best they could, after which they borrowed a spade of the settler and dug graves and buried the dead redcoats.

This was quite a task, but was finished at last. Nothing more had been seen of the redcoats who had run away. Dick had kept guards stationed, for he feared that the British soldiers might slip back and fire upon them while they were engaged upon this work.

The Liberty Boys remained in the vicinity of the home of the settler, for they felt sure that the British would be back with a stronger force sooner or later.

About the middle of the afternoon Dick and Bob, who were out scouting and reconnoitering, caught sight of a British force coming.

It was a mile away, but they saw it from a hilltop, and

they realized that they would have to look out for themselves, for it was a strong force, at least three hundred soldiers being in the party.

They looked at each other questioningly.

"What shall we do, Dick?" from Bob.

"I hardly know, old fellow."

They looked at the approaching force again for a few moments, and then Dick said:

"I have a plan, Bob."

"What is it?"

"We will make a detour and get in behind the redcoats and strike them from the rear."

"That is a good scheme, Dick!" eagerly.

"Yes, I think so; we will strike them and then get away as quickly as possible, and while they are looking for us behind them we will make a detour and get back here, mount our horses, and get away."

The two hastened back to where the Liberty Boys were and told them what was to be done.

The youths were delighted. This was just in accordance with their ideas.

They started at once, and marched as rapidly as was possible.

They made a detour and came around and got behind the British force.

Then they moved forward rapidly and drew closer and closer to the British.

Of course the redcoats were watching in front. They did not think of such a thing as that there was danger in the rear.

This made it possible for the Liberty Boys to get close up to the enemy without being discovered.

At last they were in proper position for effective work, and Dick gave the signal to fire.

The Liberty Boys obeyed.

They fired a volley from their muskets and then two from their pistols in quick succession.

This done, they whirled and darted away, and were out of musket shot distance very quickly.

The redcoats were made very angry by this sudden and unexpected attack.

They had not been looking for anything of the kind.

The worst of it was that they had lost a number, killed and wounded.

About two hundred of the British soldiers entered the timber and went in pursuit of the Liberty Boys—or they supposed that they were pursuing them.

The fact was, however, that the Liberty Boys had made a detour and got around the redcoats, and were hastening away toward the north.

They arrived at the point where their horses were tied, and, mounting, they rode a mile or so, and then dismounted and watched for the approach of the British.

It was an hour or more before the redcoats came in sight.

The Liberty Boys decided that it would be safe for them to hold their position until the enemy was within musket-

shot distance, when they could fire a volley, mount quickly and get away. So this plan was decided upon.

This was done, and the Liberty Boys succeeded in firing a volley that did considerable damage, and then in getting away in safety.

The British and Liberty Boys played a game of hide and seek during the rest of the day, but never once did the redcoats get a chance to inflict damage upon the youths.

This made them very angry, and they were determined to get at the rebels sooner or later.

When evening came they went into camp, and they were very careful to place out a double row of sentinels. They were afraid that the youths might slip up and pour a volley into their midst as they sat in camp.

The Liberty Boys would have done this very thing had the British not been so cautious. As it was, they had to remain in their own encampment and do nothing save spend the night in sleep.

As they were tired, however, the rest and sleep did them good.

The work of the day before was the beginning of a great game of hide and seek, played by the redcoats and the Liberty Boys.

A number of parties of British soldiers came out from Camden to assist in the search for the elusive Liberty Boys, and it went on merrily.

The youths managed to strike the British several blows, and once or twice they were fired upon by the redcoats, and one of their number was killed and several were wounded.

The youths had been driven farther and farther away from Camden, but they did not mind this, as it did not matter where they were. And so long as they could keep the redcoats busy looking for them there was no danger that they would do much damage to the patriot settlers of the vicinity.

On the fourth day after the beginning of the great game of hide and seek Dick and Bob, who had climbed to the top of a huge tree, caught sight of a large British force a mile away.

They looked at it a few moments, and then Bob exclaimed:

"Hello, Dick! The redcoats are coming in the other direction!"

"You are right, Bob; I wonder what it means?"

"I don't know; it would look as though they have given up the idea of trying to catch us."

"You are right, and I believe that all the forces that have been up here chasing us are there, together."

"Yes; that seems likely. It looks like an army almost."

"I don't understand it."

"Neither do I; save that it may be that they have grown tired of the game of hide and seek and have decided to get back to Camden."

"I hope that such is the case."

"So do I."

"Let's follow and watch them, old fellow."

"Very well."

They followed the British army a couple of miles, and then, feeling sure that it was really headed for Camden, they went back to where the Liberty Boys were and reported the fact to their comrades.

Some of the youths said they were glad, others said they were sorry. The latter claimed that they had enjoyed the game of hide and seek, and there is little doubt but what this was the case.

The youths mounted the horses and followed the British army.

It did not stop, save to eat dinner and rest an hour, until it reached Camden, and the Liberty Boys paused a mile north of the town to watch the enemy and await developments. Having their horses in readiness, they knew they could escape easily, if it became necessary to do so.

There was nothing in the actions of the redcoats in Camden to indicate that they intended to come forth in search of the Liberty Boys, however, and so the youths went into camp that night on top of a hill a mile from the town, determined to remain and see what happened.

Next morning they were treated to a surprise.

They saw the British breaking camp and marching away toward the south.

"They are evacuating the town!" exclaimed Dick.

"So they are," agreed Bob; "I wonder what it means?"

"Impossible to say."

They watched until they saw that the entire army had gone, and then they climbed into their saddles and rode into town.

The citizens stared at the Liberty Boys in wonder.

"Where have the British gone?" Dick asked of one of the men.

The man said he did not know.

He declared that the soldiers themselves did not know. They had been ordered to get ready to march, and had done so, and that was all they knew about the matter.

"I guess that they have started for Charleston, Dick," said Bob.

"It is likely," was the reply.

The youths remained in the town all day and that night. Then, feeling sure that the British had gone for good, they began to figure on their own course of action.

"I don't see that there is anything to accomplish by our remaining in this part of the country," said Dick; "the British have gone."

"That's the way it looks to me," said Bob; "I think that we had better look for some new field of operations."

"Yes; I feel, however, that we have done considerable good here."

"Oh, yes; no doubt about that."

They left the town and rode northward to the home of Mr. Hardy. Tom Morgan and the other Home Guard boys were with the Liberty Boys yet, and the youth in question suggested to Dick that they all stop at his house and have a big feast and a dance.

"We can have a barbecue," he said; "and we will smooth

off a large place out in the yard and have a great time dancing. It will be a good way to end up your work in this part of the country."

"That's so," said Bob Estabrook, quickly and eagerly; "let's do it, Dick."

The other youths were eager, and so Dick promptly acquiesced.

"We need a little rest, anyhow," he said; "so we will go to Tom's home and spend the rest of the day and night, and then to-morrow we will set out for Hillsborough, where I think we will find General Gates."

Tom and several more of the Home Guard youths set out and went to the homes of all the patriots in the vicinity, and invited the young folks to come there that evening to the barbecue and dance.

Tom hunted up Jeffers, the fiddler, also, and made him promise to be on hand early.

Then the Home Guard Boys rode back to Tom's home, and soon after dinner preparations for the barbecue were begun. A certain number of the Liberty Boys were to attend to this work, while some others smoothed off a strip of ground in the front yard, to be used as a dancing place.

A large fat steer was killed and put to roast, and by six o'clock was done to a turn.

The youths and maidens for several miles around had put in an appearance by this time, and soon afterward all ate supper.

An hour later the dancing begun.

Jeffers, the fiddler, stood near the front door of the house and played, and three sets were being danced in the house, while six were being danced out of doors.

This made things lively, and the young folks certainly did enjoy themselves.

Next day the Liberty Boys bade good-by to their friends in the vicinity and rode away toward Hillsborough. Tom Morgan went with them and remained with the Liberty Boys until the end of the war, when he went back home and married Jessie Ford, to whom he was engaged when he joined the Liberty Boys' company.

Thus ends the story of the Disaster at Camden.

THE END.

The next number (169) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AT BRANDY-WINE; or, FIGHTING FIERCELY FOR FREEDOM," by Harry Moore.

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